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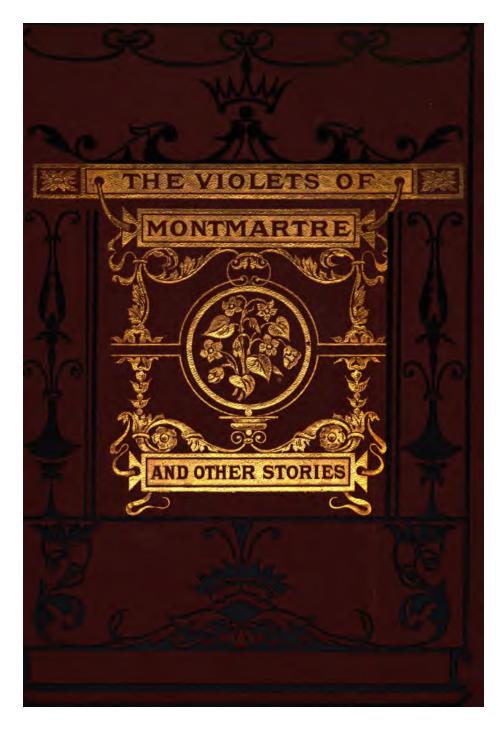
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THE VIOLETS OF MONTMARTRE,

AND OTHER STORIES.

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"She dived her little hands deep down into the grass to gather the precious violets. The brambles pricked her tender fingers, but shedid not mind that."—Proge 6.

THE

VIOLETS OF MONTMARTRE

AND OTHER STORIES.

 $\mathbf{B}\mathbf{Y}$

MADAME EUGENE BERSIER.

TRANSLATED

RY

MRS. CAREY BROCK,

AUTHOR OF "SUNDAY ECHOES IN WEEK-DAY HOURS," ETC., ETC.

SEELEY, JACKSON, & HALLIDAY PLEET STREET,
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MATHILDE, HENRY,

EMMA, HENRIETTE;

AND

PAUL,

This Translation

OF

THEIR MOTHER'S WORK

IS AFFECTIONATELY

Bedicated.

THE DEANERY, GUERNSEY, December, 1873.

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THE VIOLETS OF MONTMARTRE.

CHAPTER I.

FINDING THE VIOLETS.

In a little green and shady nook, so sheltered by its position that the cold winds of winter, however roughly and piercingly they might blow, could with difficulty find their way into it, a few sweet timid violets had ventured to make their appearance. I think they must have made a mistake, and were under the delusion that they had come to sweeten the fragrance of a mild day in April. It really was however a day in the beginning of March. weather, like most other things, is not always consistent, and that day the sun shone more brightly, and the sky was bluer, and the air more balmy than it often is in May. I am not sure, indeed, that the month of May altogether deserves the good character it possesses. Every one seems willing to unite in saying pretty things about it; but when

we take a practical and unpoetical view of it, I think we shall be obliged to confess that though, like many another fair promiser, it tempts us with smiles beforehand, it often greets us, on nearer acquaintance, with rather rough treatment, and where we expected to find only smiles and caresses we meet with frowns and tears. I fancy it was so with these violets, and that in their ignorance of the season they had formed altogether mistaken views of their fate; and, thinking only of the present moment, felt happy and joyful at being in such fair blossom; poor little lonely creatures! the wind that fanned them softly and gently was not too cold, the sun that warmed them pleasantly was not too strong. Under such genial influences they flowered and flourished as though spring had been well and safely established. They never dreamed either that not many miles away from them, in the gay busy town of Paris, a high value was set upon their lives just at this season of the year, and that if their existence was discovered, it would no longer be left in their own keeping. No, the timid little violets knew nothing of all this.

And besides, who could possibly discover them? There they lay so safely hidden in the corner where they had blossomed, under the wall of the ancient cemetery in the town of Montmartre,—the old, old

cemetery where no one was ever buried now, where no one had been buried for a very long time, which was never visited, and which lay back from the road, —a lonely road too, where few people ever passed. No one at all had come by to-day, except, indeed, one or two rag-pickers, a few of the workmen who were employed in some of the large factories which raise their high red chimneys between Paris and Saint Denis, and, perhaps, a few weary street sweepers.

But now came the moment for the children to come out of school. Some of them must pass by here, as they took their way home—if we may apply such a word, such a lovely, heart-touching word to the low, damp wretched ruins, which were let out to many poor working families at low rent,—a low rent, and yet one which seemed often too high for the poor creatures who had dived into the depths of this wilderness in search of shelter.

The children went back to these homes to find there hunger and cold, or often neglect, for many of the mothers, as well as fathers, went out to work, and returned late. It was no wonder then that the little ones often loitered by the way in no hurry to return. Perhaps one of these little loiterers—one of those children who dream at night of fields, amidst which they wander, filling their hands with the fairest

flowers—perhaps one of these might discover, by its sweet scent, the hidden treasure.

Home came the children. The clatter of their wooden shoes might be heard all along the road, mingling with the shriller sound of their eager, high-pitched young voices. The boys went straight on their way, flinging stones at the sparrows, kicking at the heels of their comrades, pulling and tugging at one another for sheer amusement, fighting merely for fun, laughing and shouting, and making many of those coarse jokes, which, alas! so often pollute the young, almost unconscious lips of poor, ill-taught children.

After the boys came the girls, amusing themselves, of course, in quite another fashion.

Some of the elder ones were walking together, swinging their baskets on their arms, and talking with all the force of their little feminine tongues. They were carrying on with energy, which gathered strength with every breath, the tittle-tattle of the school, seasoned even to such young babblers with the spice of backbiting. The younger girls who followed were principally occupied in chatting also, some of them about their lessons and their games, some few about their mothers and their homes. These walked for the most part in groups, their arms around each other's waists.

One pretty little creature loitered far behind all the others, sometimes stumbling in the deep ruts which cart wheels had made in the roads, sometimes, with an expression of weariness on her innocent, rosy, little face, sitting down to rest on a grassy bank, then getting up again with seeming reluctance, struggling on until at last she reached the very spot near which the violets had lately blossomed. It was an especially tempting spot for a tired little traveller -the trees above made a deep shade beneath, and there was a clear stream bubbling close by, which made the thirsty child feel inclined to sit down and watch it, though she knew she could not get any of the cool, delicious water for herself, and the others were too far in front for her to ask their aid. Indeed, I doubt whether she would have asked it if they had been nearer, for the girls were for the most part noisy and talkative, and little Louisa was a gentle child, and loved quiet above all things.

She could not resist this tempting resting-place, and sat down close to the violets, leaning against the thick trunk of one of the large trees which had served them as a shelter through the winter.

A waft of sweetly-scented air reached her where she sat. Weary as she was, she could not resist such a perfume as that. She rose up, sought, and found, and uttered a cry of joy. In the first ecstasy i

of her delight she looked round to see if there were any of her companions with whom she could share the unexpected pleasure; but they were out of sight, and a moment's reflection made her glad that it was so.

"They would have all turned back," she said to herself, "and then they would all have wanted some, and there are so few; they would not have left me any for little mother."

It was the first time that Louisa had ever made a delightful discovery. Her mother had often talked to her of the lovely nosegays of flowers which, in her own early years, she used, as a child, to gather in the woods; but no such happiness had ever fallen to her, poor little town-born and town-bred child that she was!

She dived her little hands deep down into the grass to gather the precious violets. The brambles pricked her tender fingers, but she did not mind that. She held the fragrant flowers firmly together, and then picked some green leaves, with which she carefully surrounded her bouquet.

Meanwhile her absence had been at length perceived by the elder girls in front.

"Where in the world is little Louisa?" said one of the eldest amongst them, turning back to see if the child were in sight; "perhaps she is flower-

hunting now, in the middle of winter, little goose that she is. What can have become of her?"

They called her, then turned back a little and called again. But Louisa did not answer. She would not on any account have left the flowers until she had gathered them all, and she had made up her mind by this time that nobody but herself must know anything about them. Her little hands worked diligently to get them all together, and she kept quiet, hoping they would go on without her.

"Must we go back, do you think, or shall we wait for her?" asked Sophy, of her companion.

"Neither one nor the other," replied the girl; "she knows her way, and is sure to turn up all safe enough. Though she is such a little thing, her mother often sends her on errands."

So the girls went on their way, and resumed their conversation; and when Louisa, with her precious flowers in one hand, picked up her basket with the other, and set out to follow them, the muddy and winding road was quite deserted, and the cold, damp dews of early evening were falling thickly and rapidly.

She began to run, catching her wooden shoes at almost every step in the heaps of hard mud, where often in the winter time she had stuck, and lost them.

Poor little Louisa! Like the violets, she had

been born in a very dreary region. The road, after running along the ruined wall of the dismal old cemetery, turned sharply round a corner and disappeared amongst the lonely regions that abound behind Batignolles and Montmartre. The pleasant word country would be entirely misapplied in connection with such a place. It was a plain, a barren, gloomy plain, where it seemed as if all fair and lovely things had refused to dwell. And moreover, it was a spot which was haunted by the miseries, the poverty, and the crimes, which ebbed into it from the great town close by. Many a traveller drawing near the place, experiences a feeling of undefined dread come over him, and shrinks at having to pass through it, walking quickly, and scarcely daring to turn to the right hand or to the left.

Yet deserted as these gloomy plains appear, so deserted that, to a stranger, they would seem almost entirely uninhabited, they are in reality thickly peopled with poverty-stricken creatures; sufferers, the very sight of whom is sufficient to inspire one with sorrow; and sinners, the sight of whom is sufficient to strike one with fear. Alas! these are the most to be pitied, and for the most part—in their case—the sin began by the suffering. The griefs for which they had never found any remedy led to the crimes which made outcasts of them.

After passing by several wretched cottages, the road became again lost in the dismal plain beyond. In the last of one of the furthest clusters of these cottages, Louisa lived, and to this abode she at length made her way. She reached it quite out of breath, with halting step and tired countenance, but holding very carefully in her tiny hands the precious violets, for which she had undergone so much, for Louisa was timid, and the lonely walk had frightened her. But the violets had been well worth the fear. She stopped a moment to arrange them again before entering the house. Her little hands were very hot, and the flowers already hung their pretty heads.

Sophy, the daughter of the owner of the house, was standing at the window of the upper story, and saw her come in. She had placed herself there indeed to watch for her, for she had been feeling a little uncomfortable, and had reproached herself slightly for having left the child to find her way back alone. Though Louisa had never been placed under her charge, she knew that she was allowed to go to school alone, little as she was, because her mother reckoned upon her having Sophy's escort back at night, since the two girls lived in the same house.

Such a house as it was! A more wretched place could scarcely be conceived. Built, or rather roughly constructed with stones from the old ruins, it con-

tained one room on the ground floor, and two on the story above. In the upper rooms lived the owner, with his wife and daughter. It was not from poverty that they lived there, for Mr. Le Conte was one of the best workmen at the large factory where he worked, and received good pay. But the house was nearer the factory than any other, and it was convenient for him to live in it; and he had made the upper rooms where he and his family dwelt most comfortable. The walls were hung with tapestry, the floor was in good repair, and the rooms were well and comfortably furnished.

The large walnut press, with its bright locks and clasps, was full of good linen and handsome clothes, pretty Sunday dresses for Sophy and her mother, and a good suit of black cloth for the father. Whilst on the stove, which in the winter was always kept lighted, a good dinner was at this moment being cooked. Its savoury smell was sufficient to excite the envy of any hungry soul.

But downstairs what a contrast presented itself!

In the one gloomy room—a room without flooring, and even without bricks, with damp and dirty walls—lived the Ramont family.

They had been three yesterday. To-day they were four, for last night a little baby brother had

been born to Louisa. This little brother's birth had not been announced to her with joyful voice as a gift from the good God—a pretty live doll whose little mother she was to be. It was not a joyful arrival. It was not a holiday.

When Louisa awoke that morning, and stole to look at the little creature, and smiled at him as he lay in the old yellow wicker cradle where she herself had slept for many a year, it was the first smile that had yet greeted him.

Their mother had closed her eyes, and seemed in a half-fainting condition. Old Dorothy, who usually came at such seasons to render what small assistance was in her power, without any further payment than her food, had done what was absolutely necessary for the poor little thing. Then she covered up the cradle with an old cloth, with a significant decision which seemed to say that she had done all she intended to do, and that the little new-born had nothing to do but to keep himself quiet, and give no more trouble.

The father, Gustavus Ramont, had returned to his home that morning more unwillingly than usual. He had just recovered from a long illness, and had been obliged to become a street sweeper, for want of being able to get anything else to do.

The wages that he was bringing home would

now suffice less than ever for the wants of the family. His wife could no longer earn anything now that she would have a baby in arms to look after. What would become of them? Into what further depths of misery would they not now be sure to fall? And they had already fallen to so low a pitch that they no longer knew what it was to feel anything like happiness; the troubles and burdens of the day were all they felt now.

Ah! in former times, in the happy days of their early married life, with what love and tenderness, with what sweet smiles, with what expressions of endearment, had not those parents bent together over that same cradle to embrace their little daughter. And as time passed on, and the domestic sky grew darker, and cares increased, how often had not the prattle of the little girl, and her innocent, loving ways and caresses, brought back the fading smile to the anxious faces of her careworn parents.

Louisa had been the sweet-scented little violet of the humble home, and many a time had she comforted and cheered it.

That very morning the new baby had received from the warm lips of his little sister that first tender kiss which his mother had been too much exhausted to give to him herself. Louisa was indeed to be a little mother to him, far more really a mother than are other children who call themselves such in the first moment of excitement and delight at their new possession, and who after imploring their mother or the nurse to let them hold the baby in their arms for a moment, soon grow weary of it.

Poor Louisa, her fragile little form was destined to bend very soon under a burden altogether too heavy for it. Soon, no doubt, she would have to leave school, forget all she had ever learned there, and find herself entangled for ever in a fatal whirl of work, in the ceaseless drudgery of the life which, little by little, was killing her mother.

"Oh, mother! mother!" she exclaimed, as she ran into the room—the dark gloomy room, just as the shades of evening, gathering thickly without, were rendering it more gloomy than ever—"oh, mother, see! I have brought you some violets." And her face was flushed with pleasure.

The poor woman had been dozing through the day, in a state of exhaustion. Old Dorothy came and went, making a constant stir and bustle, which failed to rouse her. She had washed and dressed the baby, and laid it down to sleep; but the half-fainting, half-sleeping mother had paid no heed.

Louisa ran up to the bed, and laid the violets on her mother's pillow. She inhaled their sweet perfume without opening her eyes.

"Delicious," they heard her murmur to herself, as though dreaming, "sweet, lovely—it smells like home. Oh, Gustavus, you have brought them back to us from the country. It was kind—good—the children will be so pleased?"

"Violets!" exclaimed old Dorothy, with a mingled expression of pity and contempt, "that won't do her much good. It is soup that she wants, good strong soup, or a drop of wine; but I should like to know where we are to get them."

"Can't my father give us any?" said Louisa, greatly troubled at the strange condition in which her mother seemed to be.

"Your father give us any!" replied Dorothy, "I should think he couldn't, poor man. It is all he can do to pay for the bread you eat."

"Oh, I wish I could do without eating," cried the poor child, as she burst into tears. "Mother must get well. We must do something to make her get well."

She looked sadly, first at her little bouquet, and then at her mother's pale face; then taking a glass from the table, she filled it with water, and arranged the flowers in it, one by one.

"They will not fade before to-morrow," she

said to herself, "some more will have blossomed by that time. I will go and fetch them, and I will sell them. I will get some money for them, and then I will buy some nice things for mother. Albertine told me one day at school, that every summer her sister went about selling flowers; and that she earned a great deal of money like that."

Just at this moment Gustavus Ramont returned. He had spent the day as usual, going about Paris in search of work. He had applied at several places, and especially at several cabinet-makers. Cabinet-making was his trade, and before this dreadful illness, he had had a nice shop, and as much custom as he could attend to. Now all was changed. Nobody seemed to know anything about him. As usual, he had been wandering about all day, looking for work without being able to find any. As usual, he returned to the house more weary than he had been when he left it, in lower spirits than ever.

He drew near the bed where his poor wife lay.

Louisa followed him, clinging to his smock. He stood for a few moments by the bedside, his eyes fixed upon his wife's thin, drawn face.

"She is dying," he said, abruptly. He put his old grey felt hat on again, seized a cup from the table, and went out. A few minutes afterwards, he

came back with the cup full of broth, but without the old hat upon his head.

Old Dorothy was not surprised. Her life was spent amongst the poor, and she had seen many other things of the same kind.

A few minutes afterwards, Gustavus Ramont was to be seen making his way up the narrow, winding staircase that led to the comfortable apartments where the Le Contes lived. Gustavus knocked at the door, and some one called to him to come in.

He found the family at supper—a capital supper, to which they seemed to be doing full credit. It was tiresome to be disturbed at such a moment, and by their own miserable tenant. They knew his troubles, but when they had decided on letting the room downstairs, they were aware that only very poor people would come to live in it. As they had spent nothing upon the room, but had let it just as it stood, in its bare, wretched, unfinished state, they did not ask much rent for it. That was their way of being kind, of showing charity to the poor. They reasoned philosophically about it, and had said to themselves that unless they wished never to have a moment's peace, they had better make up their minds to have people in their house, who often went early to bed in order to cheat their hunger, and went about half-clothed in the depth of winter. It was quite

impossible to pay much attention to the promptings of one's own kind heart, or one would never get any rest at all. They had served their apprenticeship in this kind of reasoning by this time. They had seen people after people come and go; poor miserable wretches. When the rent could no longer be paid, they had, of course, to take their departure. Where did they go when they could no longer live even there? No one thought of attempting to solve this problem. In short, the Le Contes would not have refused a glass of water, or a mouthful of bread, if they had been asked for it. But they waited to be asked. They stood, as it were, upon the defensive, when the poor came near them. And those who had not yet lost all dignity and self-respect, were never known to apply to them for help, until every other source had failed.

"Pray do not disturb yourself, Mr. Le Conte," said Gustavus. "I only want to say a word to you. I will not keep you a moment."

There was no need for Mr. Le Conte to sit down again, for he had not stood up. He had remained precisely in the same position whilst Gustavus was speaking—sitting quietly at the table, composedly preparing the mixture for a salad.

Gustavus paused a moment. No one asked him what he wanted, so he continued without being asked.

"I only came to ask whether you had spoken a word for me at the factory?"

"I never said I would," was Mr. Le Conte's curt reply.

"No," said Gustavus, "I know you did not, but I could not help hoping that you might have done so. They must employ such a number of men up there. It is such an enormous house, and such a safe one. Work can never fail there."

"Never," said Mr. Le Conte; "at least, it never fails to a regular workman like me, who has worked there for so many years."

And having completed his salad to his satisfaction, he began to cut himself a slice of bread.

"I have no one but you to recommend me," said Gustavus.

"And if you had not got me?" asked Le Conte. For a moment the poor fellow did not know what to say; then he continued, in a melancholy voice—

"Mr. Le Conte, God knows I do not wish to trouble you, and that I did not come here willingly; still, what I ask you would cost you nothing, just to say a word for me to the master. That is all. You know me by this time. I only want work, and I have often gone without my supper—I have even deprived my family of their needful bread"—and here

his voice trembled—"to lay aside the money for the rent."

"I have never pressed you for that," replied Le Conte. "I have never been hard upon you. You owe me a whole quarter now. Go and see whether other landlords are like me."

"Oh! I know well that others suffer also," replied Gustavus. "I know that the poor have all sorts of troubles, even those who only wish to work honestly, and are ready to work themselves to death for their wives and children, who have not strength to suffer with them."

Mrs. Le Conte was a mother. Her heart was more tender than her husband's, and, besides, she really had a sort of liking for little Louisa, who was always ready to play with her Sophy, and was a good and gentle child.

"The little girl may come and take her supper with us, if she likes," she said.

"Thank you, Mrs. Le Conte," he answered, "but my little girl is asleep by this time. She had to content herself with a bit of dry bread. She never asks for what she knows we have not got to give her, dear sensible little lamb that she is. Mr. Le Conte, I will not trouble you any more; though, for the matter of that, I only asked you for a trifling act of service."

"I did not refuse your request," said the landlord. "I will see what can be done for you when there is a press of work, and hands are scarce; but that time has not come yet. There are such heaps of people out of work now, so many poor creatures living as best they may without a roof to shelter their head, or a fire to warm themselves by, in quarries, close to the factory on the chance of getting work.

"I have another child born—poor unhappy little wretch;—and you know, Mr. Le Conte, that in recommending me you would be recommending a good workman, who would work with all his might, and who knows how to work. It is not like a new hand."

The anguish pressing at the strong man's heart must have been great indeed before it could urge him to press his own cause in this way. He had borne his heavy troubles long and patiently, without a word of complaint. But at length the charge of those he loved, loved so devotedly, had become too heavy for him. The pressure was too great for him to bear up any longer under it. And he would so gladly have helped anyone else if only it had been in his power to do so. It seemed hard to have the very smallest service thus refused him.

That night Gustavus sat up with his wife, and watched her just as lovingly and carefully as he had done seven years before, when she had given him his little Louisa, in the happy days when their lives were bright and easy.

All through the long hours he sat, hungry and weary, but brave and patient, thinking how precious she was to him, his poor Janet; how good and gentle she had always been, and how lovingly she had nursed him, how bravely she had worked for him during the long illness which had brought them down so low. Oh! how many things Gustavus remembered that night about his poor Janet. He had loved her and chosen her long years ago. They were both natives of the same place, a pretty valley in the Jura, and when he had found work at Paris, and had become a good workman there, his one desire had been to save up his wages, and buy furniture for his house, until at length the little home was comfortably furnished, and he was able to go and fetch his wife. He felt that he was running no risk in marrying Janet, and during their happy betrothal time, amidst the thousand charming sights and sounds of the country, when she would sometimes cast a look of loving regret upon the parting rays of the sun setting over the mountain and illuminating the spire of the village church, he would draw such a charming picture of the happy future before her, that all regret would be forgotten, tears and sighs could find no place in a heart which was so full of bright hopes and expectations.

Alas! the golden hopes had all disappeared. No workman, however skilful, should ever dare to trust to hopes which a very few weeks of illness will be quite sufficient to disperse. After that, all is lost. And then one deep calleth unto another deep.

Gustavus had been accustomed to sleep heavily of late. Worn out with days of fatigue and care, he had only to throw himself on his hard bed and heavy slumber overtook him, and even when he was not asleep, but was dragging himself about from place to place, in search of work, it seemed to him that he had no longer power to think, or remember, or even to love.

But to-night he was broad awake, and his mind was as active as it had ever been in his life, as he sat beside his wife's pillow; he listened to her breathing, he held her thin hand in his, and from hour to hour, as regularly as the clock struck in the Le Conte's room above, where long ago all other sound had ceased, he raised his Janet's head, with all a lover's tenderness, and poured some drops of strong beeftea into her mouth. She must be made to swallow them, or she might sink from weakness, and never

struggle through this terrible crisis. She—his wife, the mother of his little ones!

His eyes wandered all round the room, in search of something else which it might perhaps be possible for him yet to pawn.

At length they fell upon little Louisa, as she lay on her small mattress—her face round and rosy in spite of pinching poverty, and her tiny hands joined still, as they had remained after she had said her simple prayer—the prayer she always said before she closed her eyes in sleep.

The sight melted his heart. He gently placed the hand of his sleeping wife upon the coverlid and rose from his seat to step stealthily across the room, and kiss the slumbering child. He felt sure that she had gone to sleep with a heavy heart, since he had not been there to kiss her—and her prayer!—she was accustomed to say it to her mother, and he ought to have taken the mother's place.

He knelt beside her, and kissed and blessed her, then returned and leaning over the cradle where the new-born baby lay, he took its soft warm little hands in his, and kissed and fondled them. And when at length he had seated himself again by his wife's bedside, the whole expression of his face was changed. Joining his rough strong hands together just as little Louisa had joined her tiny ones, as child-like

a prayer went up from his heart as had gone up from hers. He no longer felt his fate to be a hard one. The thought of his cares had passed from his mind. With all his soul he blessed God for His mercies. He thanked Him with true and loving gratitude for the gift of these little angels, and especially for the gift of their precious mother, the gentle wife who was so dear to him; for the noble work He had given him to do in providing for these dear ones, and especially in suffering for them, and he earnestly besought God to send them help, to show him where to find work, to do so to-morrow if it were His will.

And then he fell asleep. Prayer, believing prayer, even in the midst of the greatest anxiety, brings a gentle sleep, unlike any other. It is the supreme action. All is cast upon the fatherly heart of God. Our cares, our lives, our very selves are given up to Him.

Little Louisa awoke with the birds next morning. Like the child to whom a feast has been promised next day, the first rays of early dawn aroused her from her night's repose.

Her poor father, worn out with fatigue, was still fast asleep in his chair, his arms stretched across the top of the bed, his head bent down on his wife's pillow.

The baby was crying. No doubt it had found the night long, and asked to be minded. The mother was no longer sleeping, but was watching Louisa as she dressed herself as quickly as possible in her much faded and well patched little frock.

Then she called the child to her, and Louisa saw that it was no longer the same mother as the night before, weary and cast down. She seemed to have gained fresh life during the night hours, and to be ready to take up bravely once more the task of life.

"Go to old Dorothy's, my darling," she said, "and tell her she is wanted here."

The child's first thought on waking had been that she would slip away as soon as possible. They would think that she had gone off early to school, and would not trouble themselves about her. Afterwards she would explain all about it, and her mother would not scold her.

Now she said to herself that she would not return home after carrying the message to old Dorothy. She would execute her commission as quickly as possible, and then set off at once to carry out the desire which she had been so fondly cherishing in her heart since yesterday, and for which she had been so earnestly praying when she had fallen off to sleep, with the happy believing smile upon her rosy lips, and the little dimpled hands so tightly clasped in a sort of ecstasy of childish faith.

She had seen in her dreams that night a kind, good lady who came up to her to buy her bouquet of violets, and put the money into her hand, and she was setting forth on the day's errand with all the happy unsuspecting trust of a little child.

But before she started she stood upon tip-toe to reach across the bed and try to kiss her mother.

The poor woman had not strength to raise her head, but she sent a kiss to her, and unfastening an old shawl which had been thrown over her own shoulders, she said, "Take this shawl, my darling; wrap it tightly round you. The air is so cold in the early morning, and your poor little frock is so thin. Take care not to wake father. I had not the courage to disturb him, for he is so weary, your poor, poor father. I felt obliged to let him have his sleep out, and now it's of no use to wake him; it's too late to look for work; his chance is gone for to-day. And here am I obliged to lie useless."

The child heard another deep drawn sigh as she left the room, about to realize for herself what her mistress at the Sunday school had often taught her, that great work can be accomplished by little hands; the weak hands of little children, if these children

have only learned to forget themselves for their parents' sake, and for the love of God.

The door closed upon Louisa, and the baby having ceased to fret, Janet was left to lie quiet and watch the thin, anxious face of her sleeping husband, and to observe how sunken the eyes had become, and how high the cheek-bones were.

It was no longer the ruddy face which she had known when first he brought her to Paris.

"He has been watching beside me all night," she thought; "he loves me very much. I am sure he does, though he has been a little rough to me of late, since we have been in so much trouble. I think it all came from his being so anxious. I know it has only been the worry."

And the thought of this made her pass her thin hand softly amongst the thick, rough locks of her husband's hair.

He woke with a start, as if he had a guilty conscience.

"It is late," he said, as he looked at his wife; "too late to look for work, eh?"

"We have both overslept ourselves," she answered, gently; "I have had such a blessed night, Gustavus. The soup you brought me did me so much good."

The whole expression of his face changed. "Then

you are really better," he said; "thank God for that. Now there is no longer any need to be anxious. And I have not yet kissed you and thanked you for giving me a son."

He took Janet's face between his two thin hands, and imprinted a hearty kiss on each cheek, which would have done honour to the wedding-day at the village festival; and it is a fact that Janet looked much less pale for some time afterwards.

Still nothing could long keep away the carking, gnawing demon of care. The terrible question would return, and clamour for an answer, "What is to become of us to-day?"

Gustavus answered this question before his wife had put it into words.

"Janet," he said, still looking affectionately at her, "you must keep yourself quiet. I don't know why it is, but I can't feel uneasy to-day. I know it's the most unlucky day we have yet had in one way, since I've missed my chance of work, and missed it through my own fault. But perhaps it's just because things have got to their worst that I feel as if God were going to help us. Our little Louisa taught me a lesson last night. Do you know, wife, that darling child went off to sleep praying, and the consequence was, that when she was asleep she looked just like an angel, at all events like the pictures of angels that

I've seen. Her hands were joined, and she had such a happy satisfied look on her face, as though she had got the promise of something she'd been asking for, and was sleeping happily because she knew her father would give it to her directly she woke. I could not help following her example, Janet—I could not help praying too—telling God all that was on my mind, and just leaving it with Him to help me. And then, the same thing happened to me. I fell fast asleep, and slept as though I had not a care on my mind. Wife, why is it that we have given up praying?"

"I think it has been the trouble," his wife answered, sadly. "It breaks one's heart; it takes the very life out of one. It seems useless, almost impossible, to think any more of anything."

"You must stay quietly here, and whilst you lie here, you shall pray for me. Drive away your cares. Janet, you can do nothing to make things better, but God can. None but God can help us, and I believe He will. Why should He tell us to ask Him every day for our daily bread, if He did not mean to give it to us?"

Gustavus went to the cupboard, and cut himself a piece of dry bread for his breakfast, from the loaf which had been getting stale there for nearly a week. He went out of the house as old Dorothy came in.

"You are not to let her want for anything," he said; "remember that. The woman at the corner of the street has promised to supply some more strong broth for to-day; I have left my hat with her as a pledge. You have nothing to do but to go and fetch it."

And Gustavus went off gaily. The wind was bitterly cold, but he did not care for that. The people looked curiously at him as he passed by, for it was the first time that Gustavus Ramont had gone about bareheaded, but it was all the same to him.

Janet's dinner was provided for to-day. If the strong broth gave her another such night as she had enjoyed last night—if to-morrow she were yet stronger than to-day, that was all he cared for.

CHAPTER II.

SELLING THE VIOLETS.

Meanwhile where was Louisa? She executed her mother's commission faithfully, and went straight to old Dorothy's, and then, having seen the old nurse depart for her house, she ran herself as quickly as her little legs could carry her, to the place where she had discovered the violets. It was a gloomy day. The weather was keen and dull. The few flowers that had ventured to show themselves hung their heads as though ashamed of the mistake that they had made, and sharply rebuked by the withering cold. Poor little Louisa was only able to gather a very sorry nosegay, but such as it was, she determined to try her luck with it; and, shivering with the cold, which, however, she scarcely felt, so full was her heart of warm hope, she set out for the great city of Paris.

She had only been to Paris once before in all her life, so far as she could remember. On one memorable occasion she recollected having gone there with her parents for a grand holiday.

Her mother had put on her pretty bonnet—the bonnet she had worn at her wedding, and which had never had a successor—her father had mounted her up on his shoulders, and they had all gone together to see the "fat ox" led in triumph through the streets of Paris, bedecked with its gay ribbons. Afterwards they had dined, actually dined at a public eating-house, and Louisa had sat up in pride between her father and mother. It had been a grand holiday; they had never had another like it.

When she reached Lepic Street, where the highroad from Montmartre leads into Paris, she went down the hill, always keeping to the right. Her little feet ran along easily enough until she came to the "Chaussée d'Antin," then her heart failed her. Busy people were thronging this crowded thoroughfare, and the poor child was pushed and jostled on all sides by the passers to and fro. She felt bewildered. It seemed to her as though she were about to lose her footing, and be swallowed up by a great wave that she saw approaching.

She felt bitterly cold too, and her teeth began to chatter. She looked around in search of a place of shelter, and her eyes fell upon an open doorway.

A wretched-looking woman, with a baby at her breast, had just taken up her position there. A beggar by profession, she had arranged her attitude

and composed her countenance, and assumed an expression in order to obtain as much pity as possible. She held in her hand a few sheets of letter paper to serve as a pretext for begging.

Louisa, thankful to feel herself near a woman and a mother, crouched down beside the beggar under the shelter of the same doorway, and timidly held out her own little hand, offering her poor nosegay to the passers-by. Who could have hesitated between two such beggars?

The woman saw at once that she would have no chance, so long as this gentle little girl sat beside her, extending her dimpled hand so prettily, with a pleading expression on her innocent face.

"What business have you got to come here, you little hussey?" she said, rudely, as she pushed the child roughly away from her. "I should think there was room enough in Paris for you to be able to find some other corner, without poking your nose into places where other folks were before you. But there's no end to the impudence of children!"

Poor little Louisa shrank away frightened. The one glance that she ventured to cast at the woman's face hastened her retreating steps. A hard, stern countenance, full of selfish eagerness, without a look of pity in it. Child as she was, Louisa yet wondered that any woman could look like that who had a baby

at her breast. Poor little Louisa! Brought up as she had been in poverty and misery, there were depths of degradation of which her innocent heart had never dreamed. She saw, indeed, that, though the beggar held a baby in her arms, there was no mother's heart within her; but she did not guess that the baby was not her own, but hired out for the occasion; and that possibly, at that moment, the savage look which the wretched woman gave her came from the thought that there would be twopence to pay that night for the loan of the child, and as yet she had not received a penny.

Louisa knew nothing of this, as she went off as quickly as possible, and took her way down towards the suburbs.

Out of sight of the cross beggar, she slackened her speed, for she was beginning to grow tired; and as she was walking slowly down the hill, with bent head, and a sad expression on her face, scarcely able now to restrain the tears which were welling at her heart, a sudden breath of sweetly-scented air was wafted in her face. She raised her eyes suddenly, and what a pleasant sight met them! Close beside her was a flower-girl; a basket was fastened around her waist, filled with the loveliest flowers, which she was making up into sweet bouquets with the most exquisite taste.

Louisa's eyes rested with almost incredulous admiration on the fresh bunches of snowdrops and violets, all covered still with sparkling drops of dew.

She thought that the good God had sent her a friend.

"Oh, may I stay with you?" she said, as she looked from the basket of flowers to the face of the fair girl who was arranging them. "Oh, will you let me stay with you?"

And she fixed her sweet blue eyes, still full of tears, on the girl's face.

Louisa had not been deceived.

The flower-girl was not yet too busy to attend to her. She looked at her with an expression of kindness, and a sweet smile, which encouraged the child to draw close to her, and said—

"Poor, dear little thing! and so pretty too. The children who pass to and fro in their fine clothes are not often as pretty as you are. And who sent you here, my little one? What do you want with me? And where is your mother?"

"Mother is ill—very ill," replied Louisa. "Our little baby brother was born yesterday; but mother is so ill, and has nothing to take to make her get well and strong. I found some violets up by the cemetery the day before yesterday. I can show you the place if you like; and I came to try and sell

them to get some money for mother. Albertine told me her sister got a lot of money by selling violets to ladies. But I don't think my nosegay is very pretty now," she added, looking down with a sorrowful face on her faded flowers. "They were so pretty yesterday. You can't think how pretty they were yesterday."

And she burst into tears.

Her flowers certainly could not bear comparison with those of the flower-girl.

"Do you call that a nosegay?" said the girl; "those few faded violets? Poor little darling! And you have kept them all night in a hot, close bedroom. Why, we never keep our flowers indoors for an instant. We gather them quite early in the morning, before the sun is up, while the dew is still on them. Never mind," she added, seeing the child's distress. "Depend upon it, there's a blessing on this bouquet, since it has been gathered for mother. I'll put it a little to rights for you, and your mother will have some money, I'm quite sure."

She took it out of the child's blue-cold hands, added to it a whole circle of her prettiest flowers; then, encircling the whole with some pretty leaves still wet with dew, she tied them up tightly, and placed a true Parisian bouquet in the child's hand. Little Louisa had watched the whole proceeding

with her pretty mouth open, and her bright eyes dilated with an astonished delight.

"Take it and hold it," said the flower-girl.

"Just keep it in your hand as you have it now, and offer it to every one that passes by. That is all you have to do; and I will undertake to get it bought. Such a nosegay as that is worth more than twopence. I wonder who the good God will send to buy our flowers to-day?"

The passers-by were all busy folk, who came and went full of their own affairs, and caring nought for flowers—merchants, bankers, shopkeepers, clerks, workmen, or servants laden with baskets of provisions. The young flower-girl and her pretty flowers—so rare at this season—and the pretty child who stood beside her, offering her nosegay with one hand, and holding fast her new friend's dress with the other, attracted, perhaps, a moment's attention, but no more.

Louisa was growing tired of standing so long on her little legs, uselessly holding out her bouquet. The flower-girl saw her growing paler and paler.

"Have you eaten anything this morning?" she asked.

"No," replied the child, faintly; "I did not think about breakfast. I was in too great a hurry."

"Luckily we are close to a baker's," said her

friend. "Here, child, take this penny. You can get a roll for it, one of those nice hot rolls which the shopwoman is now putting into the window. You shall have a feast for once."

Louisa soon came back with her roll. She had not touched it, however, and now held it out to the flower-girl.

"It's all yours," said the girl, "take it and eat it. I did not come away without my breakfast."

But little Louisa was so resolute in persisting that her friend should have the first taste of the tempting morsel, that she was obliged to yield and take a little bit to satisfy the child.

By this time it was ten o'clock. The young collegians were returning to school. One boy, about nine years old, with a fine open countenance and a clear innocent brow, stopped before the flower stand, with his yellow leather knapsack on his back, and surveyed the bright fresh flowers.

"How sweetly they smell. Winter is really over," he exclaimed. "I am sure mamma would like to have a bunch of violets; don't you think she would?" he said, turning to a white-headed old man-servant, who was escorting him to school.

"No doubt she would, Master Charles," replied the old man.

"Then I will choose her a beauty," said the boy,

and he drew nearer, and was about to select one of the largest and freshest in the basket, when his arm was touched by the tiny and trembling hand of a little child, offering him a smaller and far less pretty bouquet. He stopped, and saw the tiny companion of the flower seller, whose large beseeching eyes were fixed upon him.

"Well, little one," he said, good naturedly, "you want me to buy your bouquet, do you? What do you want for it?—three-pence, I suppose."

"It is scarcely worth that, sir," said the flower woman, "so far as the flowers are concerned; but if you will listen to what I have to tell you, I am sure you will be willing to do the poor child a kindness, or your looks deceive me."

And in a few words she repeated to the boy all that she herself knew of the little one whom she had that morning received, and welcomed, and protected.

It was the boy's turn now to be touched. His eyes were full of tears, and little Louisa felt very much inclined to lay hold of him by the waistcoat for fear he should go away.

"Indeed her nosegay is worth more than threepence," he said. "Here, Antony, lend me some money. I will give it you back as soon as I get home." The old man took out his purse, and gave it to his young master.

"Here," he said, "take this for your mother, little one, and if we weren't in the street I'd give you a kiss, as I do to my own pretty little sister when she is good."

And he placed a five-franc piece in the child's hand. She jumped with joy, and catching hold of his hands, kissed them with an ecstasy of enthusiasm which attracted the attention of the passers-by.

"We can take the child's address, if you please, Master Charles," said old Antony, whose own heart was touched by the scene between the pretty little creature and his young master. "I dare say your mamma would like to go and see her poor mother."

But little Louise had no very clear address to give. She could only say that she lived somewhere behind the cemetery at Montmartre, and that her name was Louisa Ramont.

"Fine ladies can't go there," said the flower-woman decisively; "it's a regular hole, you may be sure, and no place for such a lady as his mamma would be to go to."

"Mamma goes everywhere," replied the boy, "where there are poor people to be visited. Before I went to school I used to go with her. She often

took me, and I liked going very much. The people were always glad to see us. I will buy some of your flowers next time," he added to the flower-woman; and as he went on his way to school, he turned his head back to give them a friendly nod, with a pleasant expression in his brown eyes.

"What a sweet young gentleman," exclaimed the young flower-seller. "What a dear good boy. If they were all like that the world would be a paradise. His heart must be full of kindness."

So, too, was her own. She also was one of the tender, pitying souls who make it part of their business to open their eyes wide, and look all around them in search of some one to whom they may say a kind word, some one to whom they may do a kind action. It was all that in her humble position it was in her power to do, but she had never spared herself since she had learned from her mother, when still quite a little child, that God looks at the intentions of the heart, and that even a cup of cold water given in His name is not forgotten by Him.

"Will you come and see us too," said the child, nestling close to her, "please tell me your name."

"They call me Rose," she replied: "it is a good name for a flower-girl, especially for me, who have such beautiful roses amongst my flowers. You shall see them some day, in about two months. Yes, in-

deed, I will come and see you, my sweet little flower-girl; we have become too good friends for our friendship to stop here. I will come and look you up some fine Sunday, and take you with me to see our garden. My mother takes care of it. Poor dear mother, it is the pride of her heart, and it is all we have to gain our living by. It is a long way off, right up at Belleville; we can't get such a piece of ground in Paris—at least, poor folks like us can't.'

"I ought to go home now," said Louisa, "but how I wish you could come with me. You are so good; I will tell mother how good you have been to me. And is not five francs a great deal of money?"

"I should think it was, indeed," answered Rose.
"You can buy many good things with five francs.
Hold your money tight in your hand, and take care not to let it drop as you go along."

Rose spoke laughingly, for she knew that Louisa was able to take good care of herself and her money too. She had learned early to look after herself, and knew that the child also was no doubt well accustomed to go about alone. She gave her a kiss and sent her off, watching the little thing with interest as she picked her way carefully through the crowded street.

When Louisa came back into her miserable room, with a hop and a spring, she found her mother

stretched on her bed, pale and exhausted, vainly endeavouring to appease the crying of her new-born baby. He had been crying for so long that the poor woman, finding herself left alone, had summoned up all the strength she possessed to creep from her bed and take him out of his cradle. Old Dorothy was not much of a nurse. She only minded the baby and put the room to rights when it suited her convenience to do so. The broth which her patient was ordered to drink was never ready when it was wanted. By way of excuse for her own deficiencies, the good woman's tongue was always ready to pour forth reproaches against other folks.

"Where on earth have you been all this time, Louisa?" she exclaimed. "You had no business to go off like that without telling me. I meant to have kept you at home from school to-day. There were plenty of things to do that you could have helped in."

"I have been helping," said Louisa. "I have earned some money—a lot of money; at least, I have not exactly earned it, but it was given me by a good young gentleman. He gave me all that for my one little bunch of violets."

And the child, flushed with delight, opened the dimpled hand on which the five-franc piece was shining bright and tempting. "Louisa!" exclaimed her mother, anxiously, and pushing the child's hand away from her as though it were a brilliant temptation. "Where did you get that money? If you picked it up you must give it back. Ill-gotten goods shall never find their way into our house."

Louisa had not the faintest idea what ill-gotten goods meant. She looked at her mother with an expression of most reassuring innocence.

"May I tell you all about it, mother?" she asked.

"Of course you may, child, for it clean passes my comprehension," replied the woman, as she let her head fall again wearily back upon the pillow. "Only pray do something first to stop this poor child's crying. There, put the money on the table—your poor father won't bring us back nearly as much this evening—and go upstairs and ask Madame Le Conte for a little mint water. She came in to see the baby, and said he was a sweet little fellow, and she won't mind your going up to ask her."

The mint water was very willingly given, with a drop of orange flower water, which Madame le Conte added to it with a knowing air. Then tapping the child on the cheek, she called her a good little thing, and Louisa ran downstairs again.

She watched her little brother with such interest as he sucked down greedily one after another the

spoonsful that the old nurse administered to him, that for the moment, even the day's adventure was forgotten, as she cried—

"Oh, isn't he a darling—a little angel—a precious pet?"

"Yes," said her mother; "but now, Louisa, tell me all about the money."

And whilst the comforted baby lay quiet at length in his cradle, Louisa, standing by her mother's bedside, with her blue eyes beaming with excitement, related all that had happened to her since the evening before, beginning at the moment when the happy thought had first struck her on her way back from school, to gather violets for sale in the valley of thorns. Breathlessly she repeated all that she had done and felt, and suffered, before she had been able to carry this idea into execution."

"But I thought all the time that it was for you, mother. I thought how pleased you would be if I could bring you back some money earned by your own little Louisa. And oh! mother, if you had only seen that young gentleman. How pretty he was! I am sure it was God who sent him to buy my flowers. Our schoolmistress says that God hears all our prayers, and even knows all our thoughts. And last night I told Him everything—everything. I was so miserable yesterday."

And Louisa was just going to burst out crying, when a movement of her mother's made the money rattle on the table, and a bright smile took the place of the tears which were already filling her eyes. Thus the sun soon shines again through the passing cloud, and makes the few drops upon the flowers to shine like diamonds.

"Rose will come and see us very soon, I am sure," she said. "You will see how good she is. I love her so much, and she has such a pretty face. This has been a happy day; hasn't it, mother?"

The child's heart was ready to break with joy, and her mother, pressing her to her breast, felt herself rich in the midst of her poverty. She reflected, too, that there would be some sunshine now to drive away the clouds which she felt pretty sure would have gathered yet more thickly on the father's face by the time he returned home.

One good thought is generally followed by others, and little steps grow stronger and firmer every moment as they go forward in the narrow way marked out by Jesus; the example and the strength of each little one that seeks to follow Him; one link after another is quickly formed in the blessed chain of love and self-sacrifice.

Louisa finished that day as she had begun it. Her devotion to her mother led her now to make herself useful in a thousand little ways. She was so active, so handy in setting things to rights, that even old Dorothy was stirred up, and without confessing even to herself that she was so, and scolding and complaining still, began to do her work in a totally different fashion.

Janet was feeling rested and refreshed by the soup that had been given her, and the order to which things in general had been restored, and the supper was quite ready to be put on table when Gustavus came in, his face clouded with care, as his wife had expected it would be. Weary and discouraged, he threw himself into a chair. Janet did not ask him to tell her the fresh troubles and disappointments which she read in his face, but whilst Louisa was still outside at play with Sophy in the little court-yard in front of the house, she related to her husband what had been done by the child—the little comforter of them both.

Gustavus looked at his wife. Their eyes met. They were overflowing with tears. Janet put the five-franc piece into his hand.

"The world is turned upside down," he said, with a trembling voice, and with a faint attempt at a smile, "the world is turned upside down, when a little thing like that is to earn bread for the family. But it does one good all the same. God is good." He got up, and drew a long breath, but it did not seem to relieve him of the suffocating feeling that was stifling him. He went out, caught up his little girl, and almost smothered her with kisses.

"Show me where you found those violets, take me to the spot," he said.

She took him by the hand, and led him away to the place, where they soon found the plants already wet with the evening dew.

"What are you going to do, father?" she asked, as she saw him digging up the earth all around, and taking out the plants very carefully.

"We will put them in our garden," he replied, "and they will have grown to be fine strong plants by next spring, when you may perhaps have become a flower-girl."

The garden of which he spoke, consisted of a few feet of barren ground, which separated the house from the road, but which, being totally unenclosed, was trodden and hard, and showed no vestige of cultivation, even in the shape of weeds.

However, Gustavus borrowed a spade, planted the violets, watered them, and, a few days later, erected a little palisade around them to protect them. And they grew and flourished, and bore sweet flowers, as though sent to remind him, when, time after time, he returned to his home, weary and out of heart, that in answer to prayer, his little child, weak and humble as these violets, had yet accomplished things, the perfume of which they still breathed.

CHAPTER III.

CHARLES'S MOTHER.

THE early months of Spring had passed, and June had come with its thunderstorms and warm showers. The violets were all out of blossom now, but Louisa and her father had gone to spend a holiday Sunday in the country, beyond the fortifications, and had brought home with them some wild plants. The little garden round the house was fresh and green, if not adorned with many flowers. Madame la Conte had generously bestowed on Louisa all the dusty, sickly plants, geraniums and others, which used to hang their unhappy-looking heads in pots on her window-sill. They could almost see them growing when once they had been planted out in the little garden, which now occupied every leisure moment not only the child, but also her father, had to give.

Gustavus Ramont had not yet succeeded in finding regular work. He worked sometimes for one master, and sometimes for another, and then fell back again into wretched, involuntary idleness, and privation for himself and family.

Still, it was never miserable now as it used to be in the shabby little room on the ground-floor. One ray of sunshine always made itself felt there, and penetrating the heart of the weary father, carried into it courage for the morrow, brightening the faces of the loved ones around him, driving away cares, and calling fresh joys into existence.

Louisa had had a great share in this. episode of the violets had begun a fresh phase in the life of her parents. They had repeated their morning prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," with fresh faith ever since; they had learned truly to love Him who had Himself taught this prayer to His disciples, poor people like themselves, intending, without doubt, to answer it. And He had always done so. Bread had never failed them. And bread, with the blessing of God upon it, had been enough. Louisa and her little brother were healthy, fresh as The baby seemed to have reared himself, his mother had trained him in such wonderful habits. When she had dressed him in the morning, and nursed him, and warmed herself and him also for a while in their mutual smiles and caresses, often the only fire they had, and covered his little dimpled limbs with kisses, she could lay him in his cradle,

where he would amuse himself with nothing, with his little fingers, with the sunbeams dancing in the dust, until he went off happily to sleep. Then Louisa would come in from school and play with him, running often the whole way home that she might get back the quicker to her little Charles, as the baby had been called, to please her. Poor little Louisa! how often had not her heart beat at the sound of steps along the road, of carriage-wheels in the distance; how many nights had not her childish sleep been haunted with dreams of a long-expected visit, an eagerly anticipated joy; how often had she not seen in infantile fancy, the kind-hearted boy, with the compassionate brown eyes, bringing his lady-mother to see them!

"Perhaps they will come to-day, mother," she would say.

But her mother would shake her head, and at length the remembrance of the brown-eyed boy seemed a dream of the past, an apparition of a day that it was foolish to hope would ever come again.

Thanks to the helpfulness of her little daughter, and the good habits of her baby-boy, Janet had plenty of time to herself, and was able not only to keep her humble little home in the most perfect order possible, but also to take in a little work. She had been accustomed in former days to go out to day's-

work as a needle-woman in the village, and now, little by little, she got quite a regular set of customers amongst neighbours more prosperous than herself, beginning with Madame Le Conte and Sophy. This was an immense help, especially in the times when Gustavus was out of work. They had always bread to eat, and were not obliged to run into debt. Yes, God had heard the daily prayer, offered in such simple faith, and thus they waited patiently, looking forward with trusting confidence to the better days to come when the father would go forth to his daily labour, and return at evening to his home, to rest peacefully after the day's work, and not after hours of weariness spent in fruitless searches, ten-fold more fatiguing.

Janet sat working by the open window. It had been raining, after some previous days of great heat, and the earth and the plants were exhaling, even in this ill-favoured spot, something of that sweet scent of summer rain, which one delights to breathe. It carried Janet back into the early years of her own life, and she lived over again the sweet impressions of her youth, the happy experiences of her early life. She found them again at Paris for the first time. It was one small blessing of their little half-country habitation.

Four o'clock struck. It was time for Louisa to be

back from school, and her mother began to watch the turn of the road. Little Charles, lying halfnaked in his cradle, had grown tired of his hands and feet, and his grumblings began to assume a significant tone, and ask pretty plainly for some other amusement. His mother could not possibly take him up. She was busy working at a frock for Sophy Le Conte, which was promised for next Sunday. she stitched away at this pretty frock of light-coloured cambric muslin, Janet sighed to herself as she thought how much she would like to see her own little girl dressed in just such an one, how much she would enjoy making one like it for her sweet little Louisa, who was always so good and gentle, and as contented as a little bird. She would have to see her go off again to the Sunday-school to-morrow, with her old flannel-frock, all covered with patches. so shabby, much too short for her, much too hot for the season, and with almost every bit of colour in it worn out and washed out. Louisa herself, however. never seemed to care much about it. She went to school to listen to her mistress, and to be taught the meaning of the verses, which, in her turn, she would explain to her mother when she got back. It was not possible for Janet to leave the baby, and go to church, so that it was a great delight to her, when Louisa, on her return, brought back to her, with eyes

beaming with her own faith and joy in them, the blessed promises of Jesus. It seemed to her, Sunday after Sunday, like having a message sent direct to her from heaven, by the hand of her own child, to tell her of the Saviour's love, and bid her raise her eyes to Him in order to find the strength and the hope which are the especial treasure of the poor.

Through Janet the message passed on to her husband, who could not go to church either, for want of decent clothing, and thus both parents acquired the habit of looking beyond their cares, and accepting with submission their passing troubles. They lived, especially on Sundays through the ministry of their little daughter, in the holy and blessed atmosphere of the Gospel, and as the father and child read turn by turn the sweet narratives of Scripture, many a happy hour was spent by the little family in that poor dwelling, with Jesus for their guest.

As Janet sat there working this afternoon, she had been thinking over Louisa's past adventure, and of the little gentleman who had promised to bring his mother to see them, and how eagerly Louisa had looked forward to the visit of this lady, a beautiful and kind lady, no doubt, and how she had never come. And now of course she never would come. She had, doubtless, gone away to the

country as all grand ladies did at this season; and as for the little gentleman—well, no doubt it had only been a passing thought of kindness, a sudden impulse of good intention, long ago forgotten amidst all his pleasures. And yet, Janet thought, if the lady had come, she might have done them some good. She might, perhaps, have given Louisa a new frock. And there was no harm in wishing, just wishing, that it had been so.

Ah! promises should not be lightly made; especially promises to poor and suffering people, who may watch long and eagerly for the expected visit which never comes, with a yearning after the help and sympathy the lightly-given promise had led them to expect. A promise of help made to the poor is a sudden ray of sunshine for them, an unexpected rent in their dark sky, balm brought to a sore heart. It is, in short, for those who share the same faith, the establishing of that real fraternity, that true equality too often forgotten, which the Saviour of us all has ordained between all his disciples.

Janet, weary of watching the lonely road, along which no one came, at length laid down her work, and went to the cradle, with the intention of administering a little wholesome discipline to her son, and making him go off to sleep; but he received her

with so sweet a smile, such lovingly-extended arms, and such dancing of the little legs, that she could not help catching him up in her arms, and squeezing him to her heart, and finally carried him to the window to tap on the panes of glass.

At that moment, a lady, very tall, and dressed in deep mourning, made her appearance at the turn of the road, and by her side was Louisa, holding—yes holding her hand.

Of course it was the lady—the young gentleman's mother; but Louisa was not dancing by her side, or showing any of her usual manifestations of delight when she was happy; and Charles was not there.

They drew nearer, and Janet asked herself what it was that made her little Louisa shed the tears which she could see were chasing each other fast down her cheeks, and which she was wiping away with her hand.

Janet stood there, with her baby in her arms, awaiting now in great alarm the visit which she had once so eagerly desired. Her heart beat violently, but it was not timidity that kept her there motionless; it was the dreadful presentiment that had been awakened in her mind by that deep mourning dress, that handsome yet drooping figure, that face so full of beauty, yet with such a weight of sorrow upon it;

and these tears of her little Louisa, who did not call out to her, though she could see her plainly, but who walked so sadly by the strange lady, as mournful as she was.

They reached the house, and Janet, after a moment's preparation in bringing out the best chair, went to open the door.

Louisa threw her arms around her, and sobbed aloud.

"Oh, mother, mother," she cried, "the good, beautiful young gentleman is dead; he will never, never come to see us now. Oh, I am so unhappy, so dreadfully unhappy."

The baby-boy who, at sight of his sister had prepared his best smiles, frightened now by her sobs, began to cry too; and for some minutes it was a scene of weeping, for Janet could not restrain her own tears, as she embraced Louisa and sought to comfort her.

The lady alone did not weep. Charles's mother had no more tears to shed. Her dark brown eyes, which had made Louisa know her to be Charles's mother the first instant that she saw her, had black marks around them, and were sunk and faded with weeping. She watched with mournful interest the little group around her, in the humble room which she had expected to come and see with her

son. Now this poor mother was far richer than she was.

When all was quiet once more, Madame Lassuze—for such was the lady's name—drew Louisa again towards her, and passing her hand gently over the child's head, she gazed at the little innocent face, which one could not help loving at first sight, and said,—

"I have been a long time in coming. When Charles brought me the first spring-violets, and told me the story of the little flower-girl, he asked me if I would take him to see you the Thursday after.

"Thursday was always a half-holiday, and we two used to make pleasant expeditions together; and in these expeditions his object was always to do good to somebody, to make some one happy.

After we had settled to come and see you, his mind was full of it. He talked about it continually, took the greatest delight in planning what he could take with him, and at once set aside some of his carefully-kept and favourite playthings of former days, which he said would be just the thing to take to the dear little girl whom he had seen at the flower-stall. He was constantly talking of her. She had quite won his heart, and he had made up his mind to be very kind to her.

No one can tell how touched I was by all he

said. It seemed wonderful to me that two little children, both inspired with the desire of being a comfort to their parents, should thus have met in the midst of the crowd, which might well have distracted my little Charles's mind from the thought of bringing back some flowers to his mother."

"And on Thursday?" asked Janet, in a trembling voice, feeling that she must help the poor lady to the end of her story.

"On Thursday, he was already feeling ill. We put off going until the following Sunday. On Sunday he was worse; and it was again put off to the next Thursday. By Thursday he was so ill that I had but one thought. I should have forgotten all about it, if my darling had not continually talked of it, both in his wanderings and whenever he had a conscious moment. We sent our servant Antony, with a basket of things, to try and find you out; but he returned, saying that his search had been vain. The only directions we could give him proved too vague; he could hear nothing of you. not have succeeded better myself to-day, if the idea had not come into my mind to find out the nearest school. I went to question the children, and at once Louisa recognized me. We recognized each other, indeed, the moment our eyes met, did we not, little one? They say my darling was the image of

his mother, and I felt at once that the little one whose eyes were fixed on me, could be none other than the little flower-girl who had been so well described to me. It would have been a great grief to me, if I had been obliged to give up all hope of finding you; for I should have felt as though I had broken a sacred promise. My sweet boy," she continued, "was constantly delirious; but even in his most unconscious moments, his thoughts were with God. He was continually praying; and as I listened to his prayers, and saw what the state of his mind must be, I wondered no longer at his being taken away from this world to a purer one above. Just before he lost consciousness for the last time, he asked me to give him his purse, where, ever since his first birthday, he had kept all his money. How much good had he not already done to others, with this dear little blue purse! To-day he said he wished to give away all that it still contained, and he made me promise that I would carry it myself to his little friend at Montmartre; he was quite sure, he said, that she would make a good use of it. I felt that he was making a solemn little legacy, and I said, 'There will be nothing left for you, Charlie.'

"He looked at me for a moment, with an expression, the meaning of which I understood only too well; then checking himself in what he was about

to say, he added, 'You will give me some more, I know, mother dear, if I ever want any.' He knew then that he never should want any; but he shrank from the words that would give me pain. He was still able to count over with me the contents of the little purse which he had always taken such care of, and was delighted to find that there was more in it than he had thought, after having already given away so much. A few hours afterwards, he raised his eyes, as though he saw some lovely sight above him, with an expression of the most perfect rapture; his lips parted with the brightest of smiles, as though he were about to speak to the Saviour whom he loved so much, as though he were already in Heaven with Him. I believe his spirit was. He took no farther notice of us, and I felt that the little hand that lay in mine no longer responded to my pressure."

Madame Lassuze held out the little blue purse to Louisa, and told her it was for her, money and purse. She was making a great sacrifice, and child as she was, little Louisa understood this well. She could not take the purse so graciously given, but hid her face in her mother's gown, with a fresh burst of passionate tears.

"You must keep it for her, madame," said Janet, "and give it to the child herself, when she is grown up. I should not like her to have it now. I would not touch a penny of it for the world, and yet, if it was in the house, no one knows, one might be tempted, perhaps, in some time of trouble."

Madame Lassuze held out her hand to the poor woman, as she rose to take leave.

"Little Louise has a good mother," she said.

"Ah, Madame," Janet replied, earnestly, as the child ran out in front of them into the road, "I can never tell you what good that child has done to us, far, far more than I have ever done to her. She has taught us to pray. She has brought hope, comfort, love, into our home. When she comes back from school on Sunday, she repeats to us all the good things that she has learned there, and all through the week, she sets herself to follow out in her daily life all that has been taught her. I do not believe a single word is lost upon her."

"Just like my little Charles," replied the lady. "They were the Saviour's children, brother and sister in Jesus, and He has perfected his praise out of the mouths of these babes. I am not going to say good-bye to you. You will soon see me again. You must let me love you; you must let me help you, for the sake of the little angel who is now in Heaven. I must do alone now all that we should

have done together, and in this way shall I feel him still with me. It will not be very long before I see you again, my child," she added, as little Louisa, turning back, waited for them. "I have kept your violets carefully; they are amongst my most precious things—the last gift of my beloved darling. They lie in my Bible, and their scent is delicious."

And drawing the child to her, the lady kissed her tenderly.

Janet and Louisa walked back a great part of the way with her, and when they returned home they brought part of her grief back with them. Janet had forgotten all her own daily troubles. Oh, what a great gift from God she still held in her arms, in the possession of this sweet little boy whom He had sent to her in her sorrow; would that he might grow up like Charles! Oh, what a treasure had been granted her in her precious little Louisa!

Long did that grateful mother remain on her knees that evening, praying with a depth of sorrowful sympathy which surely none but mothers can know, for the lonely, desolate, bereaved, widowed, and childless lady. Thanking God for the two children He had given her, she gave them back to Him, without asking for them any share of this world's honours and riches, but only praying that a place might be

prepared for them also by the Saviour in the heavenly Jerusalem.

When Gustavus returned that night, very late and very tired, Janet soon banished all the sadness which he brought home, like a heavy weight gathered through the weary, disappointing day, with the account of what had happened to them during his absence, telling him that now she was sure they had found a true and faithful friend, and giving him the whole story of Charles and the little blue purse.

Two months later, and the dingy room on the ground floor in Madame Le Conte's house had changed lodgers. Some ragged, dirty children were sitting in tattered clothes upon the door-step, but they bore no resemblance to our poor, but always fresh and tidy little friend, Louisa Ramont, or to the clean, healthy little baby Charles.

Yet, if we had only time to go in and visit these new people, there would no doubt be plenty of opportunity for fresh compassion, fresh interest, fresh help—a fresh message to poor people sunk in sorrow. We could tell them of a provision prepared for them which would make them forget all their present sufferings, if only they would raise their eyes above this life to Him who counts the sighs of the suffering, and Himself desires to wipe the sweat from their brow and the tears from their eyes.

But alas! we have no time to become acquainted with all the unfortunate individuals, who, one after another, take possession of the wretched habitation, whose walls could tell sad tales of their sufferings.

To-day our time is very limited, and we can only inquire of Madame Le Conte, whom we see sitting comfortably, with her cat beside her, at the window which has been lately ornamented by a pretty green jalousie, if she can tell us what has become of the Ramonts.

If she had been sorry to see them go, she has already forgotten her sorrow, and seems but little interested in the subject. People of her stamp grow accustomed to seeing their fellow creatures come and go without its making any difference to them, even though they know they are never likely to see again those whose lives have for a time flowed side by side with their own. Madame Le Conte gave the new address, which Janet had taken the precaution to leave It was in a country house somewhere behind Belleville, and there we follow them, and find them established in a pretty garden, and with them some new friends,-Rose, the flower-girl, and her worthy mother. The little party were sitting together, all occupied, and to all appearance equally happy. The two elder women were busy with their needles, while Rose was engaged in making up her nosegays

for the next day's sale, Louisa helping her very skilfully, and little Charlie being on the ground, pretending to help Louisa.

If Madame Lassuze had followed the inclinations of her heart, she would have adopted little Louisa, the loving-hearted child, who so cherished the remembrance of her young benefactor that she could never hear him spoken of, or mention his name, without her blue eyes filling with tears. But Madame Lassuze was unselfish, and she would never have asked Louisa's mother to give up her child to her, or deprive her of her comfort in order to enjoy it herself. And Madame Lassuze was wise-it is a great blessing when benevolence and wisdom walk hand in hand—and she knew that it would be no real kindness to Louisa to adopt her as her own child; on the contrary, would it not have been a sin? Had not the violets grown and blossomed in a very humble spot? had not God chosen that spot, and bid them open their fair flowers there in order to rejoice the heart and benefit the life of a poor child?

Madame Lassuze wished to do real, true good to the family. She did not take them out of their station, but she made them thoroughly happy and comfortable in it. Little Charlie sitting on the ground, with his fat hands as brown as the earth in

which he had been digging, had good reason to bless the kind lady who had provided this sunshiny spot for him to play in. Little Louisa, arranging the flowers so tastefully and looking herself the fairest, brightest flower amongst them, with eyes that rivalled the violets, and cheeks that lost nothing by comparison with the rose, thanked God daily for bringing her into this pleasant spot. The flower-garden belonged to Rose, and in the snug little house where Rose and her mother lived, Madame Lassuze had engaged three comfortable and pretty rooms for the Ramont family, herself paying in advance the first half-year's rent. There would have been no need for her to pay more, for in less than six months Gustavus Ramont would be able, and more than able, to pay all the demands which his family made upon him. Through Madame Lassuze, regular work had been secured for him in the very same factory in which Mr. Le Conte was employed. The owner of the establishment was one of Madame Lassuze's oldest friends, and she obtained a place for Gustavus of much responsibility, and which brought him excellent remuneration. Gustavus had it in his power now to give himself airs, and could have turned up his nose at Mr. Le Conte himself. He preferred, however, to walk humbly, thanking God continually by his

good life, even more than by his words of praise, for the goodness and mercy that He had shown him in delivering him out of all his troubles. He tried by every means in his power to help all others, and especially to hold out the right hand of fellowship and assistance to any poor workman who might come to him in distress, imploring to have work given to him for the sake of the wife and little ones at home.

How happy Rose and little Louisa were to be thus living together!

It is evening time now, and together they had been watering their flowers, which will be left sparkling with transparent pearls all night, ready for the next day's sale.

Rose no longer sells flowers in the streets of Paris. She has now a pretty little shop, and plenty of regular customers. Louisa is to keep it with her as soon as her schooling is over. With care and diligence, and steadiness, they will be able not only to earn their own living most happily and comfortably, but also to provide for future necessities. Louisa never knows a care now, for if any little difficulty ever comes, or any shadow crosses her path, or if she is ever tempted to envy any one richer or higher than herself, the clouds are speedily dispersed

by the remembrance of the young friend, the lovely little gentleman, so dear to his mother's heart, whose goodness was the temporal salvation of her and her family, and whose memory is engraved for ever in the depths of her heart.

THE PARSONAGE OF TOURNEGES.

CHAPTER I.

GERTRUDE.

"John, it's time to harness the horse, and make a start of it," cried Gertrude, the old female servant at the Parsonage, to John, the man-servant, who came in from the field at that moment with his spade thrown over his shoulder.

"That's just what I was thinking," he replied, as he wiped the perspiration from his forehead; "but, dear me, how hot it is! Who would fancy that we were only in May? Is Master Charles coming with me?"

"I should think he just about was," replied Gertrude, "he has been ready and waiting for the last half-hour, worrying round, and making as much fuss in the house as a soul in purgatory. Where in the world has he gone now, I wonder? Oh, there

he is coming out of the stable; and, upon my word, if he has not been and harnessed the horse himself!"

"It isn't the first time he has done that," said John, as he went to meet the boy, who was bringing along good old Nestor, the worthy horse, who had entered the pastor's service at the same time as Gertrude—it would take some time to count how many years ago.

"I have given it a drink of water and a feed of oats," said Charles; "you have only got to put it into the shafts. Do make haste and get the chaise out of the coach-house."

Gertrude, standing still on the door-step, watched her young master anxiously, whilst John doffed his working clothes, and donned his coachman's costume, which consisted of a black cloth coat and waistcoat. Then, seeing that the needful preparations were well-nigh completed, she hurried back into the house, and brought out an old brown silk cloak, well lined, and a basket, which she put into the carriage.

"You'll wrap the cloak round your sister when it gets cold, won't you, Master Charles?" she said; "and you'll make her eat something. There's some fresh white bread in the basket, and some good Bordeaux and biscuits."

Charles came up to the old woman and kissed

her. He never said good-bye to his old nurse without doing so, and to-day both their hearts were pretty full.

"Give her a good kiss for me," said Gertrude, "and a good shake of the hand to master. There, go along, and come back all right. There's no need to hurry Nestor, Master Charles. You've got more than two hours to do it in, and that's more than you want."

Charles sprang lightly up to the coach-box beside the coachman, who touched Nestor with his whip, and off they started. Gertrude returned into the house, and went immediately upstairs to the first storey, across which ran a long passage, with the doors of several rooms to the right and left opening into it. Gertrude made her way immediately to one of these, from which could be heard the crying of a little child.

"What's the matter, my darling? what's the matter?" she said, as she came in, and went up to a woman in the costume of a peasant, who was rocking to and fro in her arms a little creature a few months old.

"I'm sure I don't know," replied the nurse.
"I've been more than an hour walking up and down with her, and yet I can't get her to stop crying. She won't let me do a thing. I haven't

been able even to get the things ready to dress her."

"There, give her to me," said Gertrude, and she took the little creature from her. "Now, miss, haven't you got a smile for your old nurse? We're going to make you so smart. Won't you even be pleased at that? Why, you're going to see your big sister, and your own papa."

But the last word proved too much for the good old woman, and as she uttered it her voice trembled, for whilst the little creature, quite happy at finding herself once more in her arms, began to smile at her, and crow in her pretty infantile way, Gertrude's heart overflowed at the thought of her who would have so rejoiced in her smiles, who would have been the happiest of mothers in the possession of this sweet little rosebud, and whose loss must be so deeply felt one day by her little Marie.

The nurse brought out and laid upon the bed a richly embroidered robe and a pretty cap, which had only been worn once on the christening day.

"You certainly know how to make her hold her tongue," she said to Gertrude, in rather a cross tone, as she held out her arms to take back her little charge.

"I've had more experience than you," replied Gertrude, tapping her good naturedly on the shoulder. "You'll be quite as clever as I am when you've had as much to do with babies as I've had. There, make haste and get her dressed and yourself too. You haven't got more time than you want. I'm going down to get my supper."

But before she went down, Gertrude went into another room, one in which she had already spent several hours that day. It stood at the furthest end of the corridor, and was the only room which did not look either on the meadow in front of the house or on the courtyard at the back. Though it was a small room, it occupied one side of the Parsonage, which was a long, narrow house, and on this side the wall was entirely covered with the creeping branches of a pear tree, the luxuriant green foliage of which formed a graceful frame-work to the window of the little room into which Gertrude now came.

On this side the Parsonage looked towards a little hill, shaded by fine chesntut trees, from which one could see other and higher hills, the highest of which seemed to be lost in the pale blue horizon of the summer sky. This view made the little room of which we are speaking the pleasantest and most peaceful retreat possible. The various sounds from the village could only be heard very indistinctly from there, but instead of these one enjoyed the song of birds, the pleasant humming of summer insects and the

musical rustling of trees gently shaken by the breeze; in short, all the delicious harmony of solitary and woody places. The old servant cast once more an investigating look around the room, arranged a fold in the curtain, took a chair from one place to put it in another, where, according to her present idea, it would do better, and was just making up her mind to leave the room, when the door opened, and a little girl, of about twelve years old, came in quickly.

She was dressed in deep mourning, as indeed was Gertrude also, but her frock was covered with dust, and torn in more than one place. Her hair, which hung about her shoulders in thick, fair locks, was all entangled and disordered, and her face, which was naturally a very pretty one, and singularly infantile for her age, was flushed crimson, and stained with blood.

"Miss Lucy!" exclaimed the servant, "where have you been? You've been away the whole afternoon, and what have you been doing to put yourself into this state?"

Lucy opened her grey stuff pinafore, which she had been holding up with her two hands, and out fell beautiful branches of hawthorn, and whole bunches of violets, primroses, and daisies.

"They are for this room," she said; "I am going to arrange them on the mantelpiece. You

know how fond Minna is of wild flowers. I've been gathering them in the big meadow down by the mill. The flowers grow so beautifully there in the damp."

"I've been very uneasy about you," said Gertrude; "and you ought to have stayed here to help me. There, don't put all those violets there. The scent would be enough to make your sister ill."

"Isn't it pretty?" cried Lucy, when she had arranged her flowers in a high vase; "do look at the reflection of this hawthorn in the glass; hasn't it a pretty effect?"

"All these white flowers are too sad," replied Gertrude; "go and fetch some red roses in the garden."

"That's true," replied Lucy, becoming grave all at once; "how well you have arranged the room, Gertrude; how comfortable Minna will be here! And this arm-chair by the window, was it mamma's?"

"Yes," said Gertrude; "I have made a new cover for it; the old one would have recalled too many things to her mind."

"And this pretty little white bed, and the bookshelf, with all the books in such good order, and all this nice bright furniture," continued Lucy, admiringly.

"If they could only make her forget that she is ill," said Gertrude, sadly; "you will be very good to her, won't you, Miss Lucy?"

"Yes, yes, of course I will," exclaimed Lucy, throwing her arms round the old servant's neck. "I'm going to dress now."

"I have laid all your things out on your bed ready for you," replied Gertrude; "and when you are dressed you can come and help me downstairs, and see if my cakes are not beautiful."

"I will decorate them with flowers," she replied; "it shall all be made to look like a holiday."

Gertrude sighed.

"All the flowers in the world could never make us happy to-day," she said; "but there! what's the use of fretting?"

CHAPTER II.

AT HOME.

It was half-past five o'clock, and the sun was sinking rapidly in the horizon in a golden sky. Lucy had been standing for ever so long in the road, watching for the first sight of the carriage where the road turned, at the last cottage in the village of Tournèges. Every now and then Gertrude came out to ask if they were coming. At home everything was ready; the table was laid, and decorated with flowers, the saucepans had been taken off the fire for fear of their contents being burnt up by dint of much cooking. Little baby Marie began to be very sleepy, and the white robe was already terribly crumpled.

At length the signal of approach was given by Pyrrhus, the watch-dog, whose quick ear had heard the sound of the wheels before Lucy had caught sight of the carriage. Now she could see it coming slowly out of the village, and she ran to meet it. Gertrude threw the double gates of the court-yard

wide open, and called to the nurse to bring down the baby.

The carriage turned into the yard, and drew up in front of the flower-covered porch. Charles was the first to get out, laden with packages, and followed by his father, Mr. Clavel. The pastor held out his hand to his old servant Gertrude and shook hands warmly with her, whilst he pressed Lucy to his heart, and kissed the soft cheeks of the baby, with a kind word of compliment to her nurse upon the child's good looks. Gertrude had mounted on the step to embrace Minna, holding both her young mistress's delicate hands between her two rough ones, and vainly endeavouring to appear happy, as she looked at the pale thin face of the young girl, who was smiling at her, but evidently with an effort.

"Would you like us to carry you to your room at once, Minna?" said her father, as he returned to her side; "or do you feel strong enough to stay downstairs and have supper with us?"

"Oh, I should like to stay with you," she said. She passed her arms round Mr. Clavel's neck, and, with the help of the man-servant, he carried her into the dining-room, and placed her in an armchair which Gertrude had prepared by the table in Minna's usual place.

At her earnest entreaty, the baby was laid on her lap; but whilst she was tenderly caressing it, leaning her own face against the child's velvet cheek, she was suddenly seized with the feeling of faintness which she knew only too well, and was obliged to ask that she might be carried to her room. They had all taken their places at table. Charles and Lucy, especially, were quite ready to do full honour to Gertrude's delicious cakes; but, at the sight of their sister lying back in her chair, with her eyes closed, and a deadly pallor on her face, in a fainting condition, they were filled with alarm.

When Minna had been laid on her bed, she soon got better. Her father left her alone with her good old nurse, and came back to the dining-room. He comforted the children by telling them that their sister often had these fainting-fits, and recovered from them; and all three once more made an attempt at supper. The baby, who alone had taken no interest in what was going on, had been laid fast asleep in her cradle.

Minna's pretty room was being lighted up by the rays of the setting sun. The sweet scent of the woods, and of all the spring flowers, came in puffs through the open window. The nightingales were singing quite close to the house.

"Don't you think you will be comfortable here,

my darling young lady?" said Gertrude, as she tenderly fondled the cold hands of her young mistress, which she was warming in her own. "See how nicely we have arranged everything for you; and we will take such care of you. You will soon grow strong again."

Minna drew her old nurse towards her, and kissed her.

The thought of all her sorrows and sufferings, all her trials and privations, was bearing down upon her heart, and the weight of them was heavier than she could bear. She burst into tears.

"Shut the shutters," she cried, amidst her sobs.
"Oh! shut the shutters. It is too lovely outside."

Gertrude did not comply with her request; but, instead of doing so, she took down a picture that was hanging over the bed, and, without saying a word, put it into the girl's hands. Minna pressed it to her breast; then covered with kisses the face of the sweet, patient mother who had been so resigned and uncomplaining. Her tears had relieved and soothed her, and Gertrude was able to help her to undress.

When she was comfortably settled in bed, Gertrude remained for a little while sitting beside her, just as she used to do in the days when she was a little child, and would never go to sleep unless her nurse held her hand, and told her a story. This

evening she told her all about baby-how nicely she had been getting on whilst she and her father were away; how dull the house had seemed in their absence; how delighted Charles and Lucy were that they had returned; how many pleasant surprises they had prepared which she would see to-morrow; and how everyone in the village, from poor old, blind, and infirm Jane, down to the youngest amongst the school-children, had come constantly to the Parsonage to ask what news had been heard of her. She left her young mistress soothed and comforted, her large, expressive eyes gazing out on the clear sky, where a few bright stars were already shining; the bitterness of her trial forgotten for a moment in the thought of how many there were to love and comfort her.

Soon after, Minna heard the deep tones of her father's voice conducting the evening family worship. She knew that he was praying for her—imploring God to heal her, if such were his good will. They all came to wish her good-night—to inquire, with the most tender anxiety, how she felt. Then Gertrude came and made up a bed for herself beside her, and prepared everything that she could want for the night.

CHAPTER III.

YOUTH AND SICKNESS.

BABY MARIE was to be ten months old next day. It was a sad birthday, and recalled painfully, both to the pastor and his children, how heavy a loss they had all sustained in the death of her whose place none could ever fill. Tears had been this poor baby's only welcome into this life, for as she came into the world, her sweet mother passed out of it. This sad blow had been very speedily followed by another. Very soon afterwards, Minna, who had been until then so strong and bright, had begun to fade like a fair young flower suddenly blighted in the full beauty of its blossoming. At first she could only get about the house with difficulty, then she was obliged to take to her couch, and in a very short time she became quite helpless, just after her dying mother had entrusted her with so arduous and solemn a task I

Her father, in terrible grief at this fresh sorrow,

made up his mind to take her at once to Paris, in order that he might get the very best advice for her. The good village doctor had himself urged his doing so, and for nearly six months Mr. Clavel and his daughter had been obliged to remain at Paris, the doctor there wishing himself to superintend the carrying out of the course of treatment which he recommended. The evening before they returned home, Mr. Clavel had written word to Gertrude that the treatment had not yet produced the effect that the doctor had expected, and they had so eagerly desired, and that they must expect to see Minna much weaker, and more ill than when she had left, at all events in appearance. He added that the doctor still held out great hopes of the illness ending favourably, but warned them that it would be a long one, and that it would be necessary carefully to continue to carry out in the country the course of treatment commenced at Paris.

Naturally the return home was a sad one. When Gertrude met her master she saw at once that his face, the expression of which by nature was so bright and joyful, had aged immensely, and was marked with a melancholy which it grieved her to the heart to see. His hair, black as the raven's wing only such a short time ago, was already quite grey. That night after he had gone to his room—the room next

to Minna's, where his beloved wife had died, and which he still kept for his own—Gertrude could hear him more than once sighing heavily as he walked up and down. Happily, Minna had fallen asleep, and Gertrude hoped that for a little while, at all events, her troubles were forgotten.

But it was not so. Even in sleep Minna's sufferings did not cease. The weight that lay heavy at her heart did not leave her, and when she again opened her eyes, at five o'clock next morning, it was the saddest waking that she had yet known since her mother's death, and her own illness. All seemed to come upon her at once: she found herself alone in her room, for the good old servant was already up and away about her work. The morning was as lovely as the evening had been; it was one of the loveliest days of May, the tops of the trees and the summits of the distant hills were lighted up by the morning sun.

Minna could see all this through her pretty window framed with verdure, the morning breeze shook the branches of the pear-tree, and she could discern the little hillside paths by which, in happier days, she used to climb the pleasant hills.

Formerly, she used to awake to all the joys of vouth, and set out on lovely early morning walks. Oh! how she used to delight then in all these things,

in the delicious soft morning breeze, in the blue sky, and bright sunshine. They were all so pleasant then! But now they did her more harm than good, and in bitter sorrow, she turned her head towards the wall that she might not see and feel them.

Who is there amongst us who has not experienced the pain that there is in the contrast between a rejoicing nature without, and a sorrow-stricken soul within. To-day there seemed to Minna a positive cruelty in this contrast which was more than she could bear. She thought of her blighted youth, of the weary months, of the long years perhaps that were in store for her—years of weakness, suffering, and uselessness.

She had read this miserable prospect for herself in the faces of the doctors, whose consultations and prescriptions had all proved fruitless, and in returning to her home to begin there an invalid life, all she thought of was of the long days of privation and suffering prepared for her—for her who was but seventeen!

Soon she heard the house stirring. Every one was beginning a new day of activity and life. Her brother and sister were already out in the garden. How pleasant it must be there! Gertrude and John were chatting over their work in the kitchen. She

could hear baby Marie's sweet little voice crowing to her nurse.

Her father was up, and walking about in his room. She tapped on the wall, and in an instant he had opened the door of communication between the rooms, and, leaning over her, he kissed her tenderly, asking her how she was, and how she had slept? His face looked pale and haggard, as he took down the portrait which was hanging over his daughter's bed, and gazed long and tenderly on the gentle face of the sweet companion of his life, whose loss he felt so deeply.

Minna longed to speak to him, but when one has hardened one's self, as it were, against a trial, the heart is closed; sympathy is impossible, or, rather, the expression of that sympathy is impossible. It often happens that whilst at heart we love, understand, and suffer with one another, words of bitterness are often nearer the lips than any others.

At this moment Gertrude came into the room, carrying a tray, on which was prepared the most tempting little breakfast in the world. There was fresh white bread, and newly-churned butter, delicious morning milk, and in a shining little coffee-pot set apart for the sole use of her young mistress, some of the beautiful coffee which had been brought from Paris by Mr. Clavel. His thoughtfulness for his sick child had led him to bring many things for her

which he knew would not be equally well-supplied by the village grocer. Gertrude placed all this on a little table which she drew near the bed; then, opening the window, the sweet morning air stole in and fanned the feverish cheeks of the girl.

Whilst Mr. Clavel was standing by the bedside, watching her with the deepest interest, and Gertrude was pouring out her cup of coffee, the door again opened, and little Lucy looked in. Seeing that her sister was awake, she ran and threw herself on her neck, laying on the bed the loveliest bunch of wildflowers, all dripping with dew; amongst them, there were even some wild strawberries, which were just beginning to redden.

"You have gathered all those this morning?"
Minna asked.

"Yes, Charlie and I have. We got up at five o'clock, and we have been such a way out in the woods; oh, such a way! It was perfectly lovely there."

Lucy stopped suddenly, for she saw that Minna's eyes were overflowing with tears. How often had she not been there herself!

"Come, come, Miss Minna," said Gertrude, "don't make yourself unhappy thinking about the past. There's no use in fretting over that; just see what a nice little breakfast there is here."

But Minna had no appetite. She tasted a few spoonsful, then pushed the cup away from her, and Gertrude was obliged to carry away the untasted breakfast.

They all went down to breakfast, and when they were gone, the nurse brought baby Marie to see her sister.

She was the sweetest little thing, but looked very delicate, in spite of the pink colour in her cheeks. She had just the same large blue eyes that were in the mother's picture, and just her innocent, confiding look.

As Minna rocked her to and fro in her arms, and covered her soft white satin neck with kisses, the little eye-lids which had opened with those of the birds, at the first dawn of day, gradually closed again; and Minna laid her little sister sound asleep by her side, safely nestled between her and the wall.

The others came back into her room. Mr. Clavel held the large family Bible in his hands, and they had prayers there. The father's voice trembled so much that every now and then he seemed ready to break down. He appeared unusually overcome, until at length, when in his prayer, he was commending to his heavenly Father's care each of these dear children whom He had seen fit to deprive of a

mother's love, his voice gave way altogether, and for a moment the sound of sobs was all that could be heard in the room.

Charlie and Lucy came afterwards to kiss him, and going again up to Minna's bed, the father watched long and sorrowfully the last little treasure left to him.

"She belongs to you, Minna," he said; "she is your little child."

Minna kissed the tiny little rose-coloured hands, and tears poured down her cheeks.

"I can do nothing for her," she murmured, "I am utterly useless."

Mr. Clavel sighed; he did not feel himself able at that moment to attempt to comfort his poor child.

"What are you going to do to-day, papa?" she asked.

"I am going to take Charlie and Lucy into the village, and to see their governess. I want to ask her how they have been getting on with their lessons, and then I shall go and see some of our poor people. And I had better ask the doctor to come and see you, had I not?"

"Oh no," said Minna, "I don't want to see anybody; he can't do me any good."

"But the doctor is a kind friend of ours," he

said; "you know how fond he is of you. How could you refuse to see him?"

"And old Jane," said Gertrude, "and all the people who have been so anxious about you, and who will be sure to come to inquire about you to-day."

"I won't see any of them," replied Minna; "I want to be left alone. I can't bear to see anybody. I wish we were back at Paris, where we did not know any one. It was not half so bad to be ill there."

It was useless to attempt to contradict her. She would have gone off into one of the fits of hysterical crying, which her father dreaded above all things.

He left the room with a heavy heart, and a sad foreboding of what was in store for them.

When they were all gone, Minna made the servant bring the baby's cradle into her room: she wished to keep her with her all day. After this she told Gertrude she wished to get up.

Gertrude brought her everything she wanted, and began to dress her like a baby. She combed out the long black hair which she had taken such care of formerly, and sighed as she perceived that whole locks of it came out in her hands every time she passed the comb through it. "I think I had better have it cut," said Minna, "it is all falling off."

"That's just what I was thinking," replied the old servant, "you often have bad headaches, don't you?"

"I always have a bad headache," replied Minna, and she put her hand to her forehead. She arranged her own front hair, turning it back, bringing one of the beautiful long locks across her forehead—a little vanity which she must also give up; and then Gertrude put on her black dress, and prepared to lift her out of bed.

"You can't carry me by yourself," said Minna, "you would let me fall. Wheel the arm-chair close to the bed, and I can slip into it by myself."

Gertrude hesitated. Minna had grown so light that she could have carried her with ease, but Minna would not hear of it, for the old woman's hands trembled, and she was not so steady on her legs as formerly.

So Gertrude wheeled the arm-chair close to the bed; but in order to get into it, Minna must put her feet to the ground, and this she tried in vain to do. Her legs gave way under her, she turned pale, and caught hold of Gertrude, who held her firmly, and placed her gently in the arm-chair.

The poor young girl had wished to try her

strength, and this little incident had shown her how weak she was, and what progress the illness had made.

Gertrude wheeled her close to the window, placed a low chair under her feet, and put the little table beside her. She arranged the room, dusted the furniture, unpacked the trunks, and put away their contents in the wardrobe. She found Minna's Bible, and laid it beside her on the table, without a word.

"You have had no breakfast," she said at length; "shall I bring you some lunch?"

Minna made a sign of refusal and closed her eyes; and Gertrude, placing the bell within reach, left her. She had a heavy task before her, and she felt so low that for a moment it seemed as if she had no heart to set to anything. But Gertrude never gave way long. She had been for a long time now bravely fulfilling a task which had become quite too much for her strength, though she would not confess that it was so, even to herself. She was so entirely devoted to those whom she served, that she never even paused to think of herself, or to ask if this constant fatigue was not too much for her. She had no individual existence, no future of her own; the motto of her whole life was expressed by that of the ivy, "Where I cling, I die."

Minna's blighted future, that of her beloved master, and of her darling mistress' motherless children: these were Gertrude's sorrows.

She divided herself into different portions, to be mother and servant at one and the same time, and friend also; for often now did the good pastor turn to the faithful creature for aid and comfort in his trials.

Minna had not been alone more than a moment, her eyes were still closed, and the baby sound asleep in the cradle, when a somewhat sharp tap at the door made the little invalid start. She had not time to say "Come in," before the village doctor entered the room, and sat down in the chair by her side.

"My poor child," he said, looking pityingly at her, and gently taking her hands in his.

Minna burst into tears.

"Oh! Mr. Vincent," she said, amidst her sobs, "I am so ill, so unhappy. I don't like any one to see me like this. I asked papa not to let you come."

"Yes, I know," replied the doctor, in a pleasant tone; "your father gave me your kind message, but I said to myself, 'If she does not want me, that's all the more reason why I should go.' Besides, it's the doctor that she does not wish to see. An old

village doctor is always a stupid, ignorant old body. But I am not your doctor, Minna, I am your friend—the first friend you ever had. I gave you to your parents. I watched you growing like a little mushroom. I have loved you like my own child, and have taken you to God daily in my prayers. It is surel ynot this friend whom you do not wish to see? That would be impossible."

Minna looked through her tears at the kind face before her, so full of goodness and honesty, and which she could remember as long as she could remember anything, and she held up her mouth as in the old days when he asked if she did not mean to give him a kiss. He drew her towards him and embraced her tenderly, his own eyes filled with tears also; then, as if to hide his emotion, he made a pretence of feeling her pulse. Minna could not help smiling when she saw him return so soon to his professional character.

"You must let me feel it," he said, laughing; "it's an old habit I never can get rid of. I must be allowed to act the doctor, if it's only to make me feel that I am still of some use."

"I am much more ill than I was when I went away, that's all," said Minna, "and the Paris doctor has sent me home because he saw very well he would get no credit out of my case. He did not the least know how to treat me."

"Oh, nonsense, nonsense," said the doctor, as the stroked the thin hand that he still held in his; "and how are you much more ill?"

"I can't walk a step now. I can't even stand. I tried this morning, and I fell down."

"If you are to get well," he replied, "you must first get stronger. I can see very plainly that the air of Paris has made you grow both pale and thin, and has taken from you the strength you need to set you up again. Suppose we were to try and follow out here the treatment of my Paris colleague. I have an idea that with our good air, your native air, the air of the woods and mountains, it would answer better than it did there."

The heart of the young invalid was growing lighter every moment.

"But," she said, "it would be so difficult to carry out his treatment here. It's a system of baths and douches."

"Your father has given me all the printed directions. I will take upon myself to make all needful arrangements, so that we may begin the system as soon as possible. And who knows if you may not be strong enough in a fortnight to come out for a drive with me in my little carriage."

Minna smiled quite brightly.

"But then I must come and see you every day," he added, "and you must not send me away."

There was no need to answer this question, and thus it came to pass that, little by little, Mr. Vincent succeeded in amusing his young friend. Then suddenly laying aside his part of doctor, he became the chronicler of all the village news. Minna had been born there, and she had been interested in everything before her illness. Now the good doctor succeeded in arousing her to fresh interest in what was going on, whenever she was not absorbed by the thought of her illness. There had been a grand feast at the school on Easter-day; the new master was a good musician, and had taught his pupils a new hymn, which it had made every one cry to hear them sing, their little voices were so true and sweet. next day, the Easter eggs had been hidden in the wood, behind the church, and one could hear the shouts of the children hunting for them, for more than a mile round.

"Your little pupils have grown tremendously," he said to her one day; "they are always asking about you. You would like to see them again."

Minna sighed; she had not thought about them for more than a year.

"Poor little thing!" said Mr. Vincent, guessing

her thoughts; "you may do many good and useful things yet without moving out of your pretty room, which is really quite a little drawing-room. And to begin with," he added with a smile, as he rose to go, "you may pray for your old doctor. He is growing an old man now, and he has not done nearly as much as he ought to have done in the service of the good Master, who will soon be sending for him."

"Oh, Mr. Vincent," said Minna, holding her friend by the hand.

"Yes," he repeated, as he fixed an earnest look upon her, "you can be a good angel to us all, Minna, during this time of sickness and seclusion. God can teach you how. May He Himself bless you."

Before leaving the room, Mr. Vincent stopped before the cradle of little Marie, who, wide awake now, was playing with one of her feet, which she had managed to get over the bed-clothes. He seemed as though comparing the child's face with that in the picture which hung over Minna's bed; then, taking the little creature up, he laid her on Minna's lap, and said,—

"There, baby, go to your little mother."

And with a kiss to each of them he hurried out of the room as though he had been the busiest doctor in the whole world. He met old Gertrude on the stairs.

"You are wanted upstairs," he said.

Gertrude would gladly have detained him a moment to ask him what he thought of her dear young lady, but he hurried past her, as though he had not a moment to spare. I think there was something shining in his eyes, behind his spectacles, which made him unwilling to meet those of any one else. Gertrude heard the sharp crack of a whip, and saw the doctor driving away at a rapid pace in his chaise, towards old Catharine's cottage, a poor woman on whom he had just been performing an operation for cataract.

Gertrude was carrying upstairs another nice little luncheon, which she had prepared in the hope of tempting the invalid. She uttered an exclamation at the sight of baby Marie standing upright on her sister's lap, and putting the tray down upon the table by Minna, she held out her arms to her doll, as she called her. The little creature knew her old friend too well not to hold out her arms to her also, crowing aloud, and kicking vigorously for joy.

"How could Mr. Vincent leave you like this," she said, "when he knows perfectly that you could not even have got at the bell, with baby on your lap. Suppose I had not come up!"

"He knew you would come, and I was so happy

to have her all to myself, little pet. And now she won't stop any longer with me," she added, in a discontented tone, as the baby hid her face in Gertrude's dress.

"Oh yes, she will!" said Gertrude; "offer her a biscuit. Stop a minute, we'll put some sugar on it."

Minna held out the biscuit to her little sister, and the baby at once allowed herself to be placed again in her lap, smacking her lips with intense satisfaction at every fresh bite of the sweet morsel which she held in her dimpled hands. Minna made the amusement, which was still greater for her than for baby, last as long as possible; but at length the biscuit was finished, and the child cast supplicating glances at her old nurse.

"Ah, you think I'm going to keep you," said Gertrude, eating her up with kisses; "I've plenty other things to do. I'm going to carry you off to your nurse, and she must mind you. It's much too fine for you to be stopping indoors. You must go out in the garden."

She carried off the child, and Minna asked herself how in the world she should get to the end of this long, long day, which was but the forerunner of many another equally weary. Oh! how sad a time was before her! The good doctor's pleasant words had only cheered her up for the time, but she was as

dreary as ever; her heart was not yet prepared to receive them, understand them, and act upon them. She took up a book in the hope of getting rid of her thoughts for a time, but her head was too weak to allow of her following the thread of the story for more than a few minutes. After reading a page or two quite mechanically, without in the least being able to understand the meaning, she laid the book down and leant her forehead wearily against the Little Marie was playing below. window. was trotting after a ball which the nurse was throwing before her, supporting herself with wonderful strength on her little legs, only holding the nurse by one hand. Oh how Minna longed to be playing thus with her little sister instead of the nurse. But it gave her no pleasure to watch the strength and progress of the child. Her only comfort would soon be taken from her—the little one would soon run alone, and she would be of as little use to her as she was to the others. Thus it was that everything turned to bitterness, so far as she was Minna pushed away the tray without making any attempt to touch the luncheon that Gertrude had prepared, and remained plunged in despair.

CHAPTER IV.

TOURNEGES.

THE village of Tournèges, in the department of the Vosges, was beautifully situated on the lowest ridge of the chain of mountains, whose rich and wild beauty ought, one would think, to have attracted the attention of travellers taking their way towards grander or more celebrated places. The church was very old, and many a swallow had built itself a nest in its ancient walls. This part of the country had been, during the seventeenth century, the refuge of the poor, persecuted people whom Louis XIV. drove from the kingdom, and who sought a hiding-place amongst the mountain retreats. The place had preserved, with the reformed faith, a certain austere simplicity, which recalled to one's mind the Protestantism of other days. For many years the little Gothic church, built by a religious order, whose ruined convent still stood close beside it, resounded,

Sunday after Sunday, with the singing of our old Psalms.

Built in the same style as the church, at a little distance from it, stood the parsonage which we have already described to you as standing on the slope of the hill, bordering on the lonely woods. Below the parsonage, the little village, studded here and there with clusters of trees, joined by a gentle descent the rich surrounding plains. These were thickly planted with poplars; and the sound of a running brook completed the feeling of peace and rest which the place was calculated to inspire. Still, Tournèges and its neighbourhood, distant as they were from any important line of road, remained unvisited by strangers. The clergyman and the doctor had long been the only educated men in the place; and Mr. Vincent, the present doctor, had taken it into his head to make historical researches concerning the neighbourhood—led to do so by the curious old church and ruins which made such a beautiful and poetical picture of the village. had gathered together, with infinite labour, all the old documents which could show what the place was like in the middle ages; and he was daily adding to this collection legends and traditions gathered from the various cottagers. Moreover, he often went on little journeys into the districts round, to hunt up any old parchments or relics which might be found there.

All the country people in the neighbourhood knew why the light could be seen shining in the doctor's window long after every one else had gone to bed; and when the mayor, M. René—a peasant like his neighbours, but unwilling to acknowledge the same ignorance took off his hat to the doctor down to the ground, Mr. Vincent knew that the respect was paid far more to his historical than to his medical knowledge. Every one considered him as the man who one day would make the village of Tournèges known to the whole of France. And, with that day, the countryfolk considered that a new era would begin for them. Then they would soon hear the whistle of the railway, bringing to them innumerable visitors; and then they would be able to despatch to the metropolis the various products of the place. arrival of the railroad would open to them communication with the world beyond, and, furnishing them with the necessary means of speculation and gain, would be welcomed with acclamations of joy, even though it should pass straight through the grand old ruins which were their poetical possession.

But the expected work—which, by the way, was to bear the fine-sounding title of "Historical and Archæological Discoveries made by Dr. Vincent on the Origin of the Remarkable Antiquities of Tournèges"—was not to see the light quite so quickly.

The prosaic villagers were already beginning to reckon less on the doctor's pen for making them famous, and more on the excellency of a certain kind of carefully-prepared sausages, made by their good housewives.

As to the doctor himself, he desired nothing so much as to live and die peacefully in his quiet retreat. An influx of noisy visitors would have entirely destroyed the delight which he enjoyed, absorbed in his studies. It was quite enough for his happiness to live in the past; to go and dream night and morning around the old monastery and to admire its ruins by the light of the setting sun, or the rising moon. Then he would return to the literary atmosphere of his study, to compose or arrange his precious papers. When any fresh discovery filled him with a joy which demanded sympathy, he set off, with his papers in his hand, in search of Mr. Clavel, who was always ready to share his delight, both as a poet and historian. The pastor, though very sceptical as to the publication of the forthcoming volume, thought that Richard Vincent, the doctor's son—a youth of the greatest promise and energy-would very likely one day revise, with a rapid and able pen, the work for which his father was laboriously preparing such copious materials.

The village of Tournèges was composed of one

steep street—the High Street. There were to be found the baker, the butcher, and also the Shop—properly so called. This was kept by the Widow Léonard—a worthy woman, half grocer, half linendraper, and much more besides; for she had been endowed with a truly wonderful sagacity in finding out what sort of things could, by any possibility, be required or desired by her fellow-villagers. Anything they were likely to want or covet, that the Widow Léonard was careful to provide.

A few lanes, narrow and winding, crossed the High Street at various distances. These led to a country road, more or less distinctly marked, with houses scattered here and there, gradually further and further apart. In the country, in France, the peasants' cottages are, in general, anything but what one would like to see them. For the most part, indeed, they are mere hovels, with mud floors, where whole families live huddled together in one room.

At Tournegès, however, it is not so, and the houses are almost all pleasant to behold. Outside, they are pretty, whitewashed every other year, and often adorned with a wild vine and roses. Inside may generally be found a tidy housewife, whose chief pride lies in having her walnut wardrobe well filled with good home-spun linen, and who likes

to have her kitchen and bedroom as clean and smart as they can be made.

Quite at the top of the village, a little road which wound along the foot of the church and ruins, covered with brambles all at this moment in full flower, led to a house of more elegant appearance than any other. The garden in front was beautifully kept, and the creepers surrounded the windows, which were large enough to let the light enter fully and brighten up the interior. One of these windows, on the upper floor, was adorned with white windowcurtains. We must go into this house, and ascend its scrupulously clean wooden staircase, and if we tap at the only door which we shall see up there, it will be opened to us by a little girl, whose acquaintance we have already made, Lucy Clavel. She has been in this room ever since early morning, working with such diligence at her lessons, that her governess, Miss Helen Wilmore, is at a loss to imagine what change has come over her usually giddy and impatient pupil.

Miss Wilmore, Lucy's governess, had only come to Tournèges a short time before, since Minna had been away. The invalid only knew, by hearsay, the young governess who was carrying on her little sister's education, and seeking by every means in her power to win her affection. From

the beginning, Miss Wilmore had taken the deepest interest in Lucy, and there was something in her manner towards the child, which constantly reminded her, though she could scarcely have explained it to herself, of her own mother.

CHAPTER V.

HELEN WILMORE.

THE sudden appearance of the young stranger in this lonely village was not very easily to be understood at first. What combination of circumstances could have induced her to banish herself so far from her own country, and break all the happy ties that bound her to her own home and her own people, to come and settle down in a little village, the very name of which was not to be found on the most detailed map of France? Alas! death had broken all Helen Wilmore's ties for her long before she left England. Had any one asked her if she had not, at all events, been sorry to leave behind some friends whose sympathy was a comfort to her, she would have replied by a sad smile. Cruel circumstances had made England a yet less friendly home to Helen Wilmore than France.

Helen Wilmore had once been rich. She had

spent her early youth travelling with her only brother. Early left orphans, they had made a kind of vow to devote themselves to each other, to live always together. It was the dream of their youth. Their easy circumstances allowed of their living most comfortably, and they took a cottage ornée in one of the prettiest parts of Devonshire, which was fitted up with every comfort, and furnished elegantly and luxuriously. Here they spent the summer, and every winter they went abroad, visiting by turns the most interesting places on the Continent, and studying their history and scenery. But it had pleased God to overthrow very speedily a happiness which seemed too perfect. Helen lost her brother, and with him her fortune, and remained almost alone in the world, obliged either to earn her own living, or to become dependent on some distant cousins. She had known them well during the days of her affluence, and they had then made a great deal of her. But now a complete change came over them, and Helen found that the bread they would have been willing to share with her, would be the bread of humiliation. She resolved on earning her own living, by giving lessons and working at her needle, but this did not save her from the reproaches and insults of her relations, who considered that they also were lowered and humbled by her poverty and

dependent position. At last they endeavoured to persuade her to marry a man who had been attached to her for some time, and who offered to raise her from her present position, and provide handsomely for her. Helen fully appreciated his generosity and affection, but she could not agree to his wishes. He was a man utterly devoid of religion, and she could never have consented to a marriage with one who did not even believe in those precious truths which had been her sole support and strength when all else had been taken from her. After this her life in England became intolerable, and she conceived the idea of going abroad, in order to be out of reach of the cruel taunts and insinuations which daily cut her to the soul.

She told no one of her desire, but spent night after night in prayers and tears, in the little room which she occupied in the house of one of her cousins. What she dreaded most of all, was to do anything that would be contrary to the will of God. She felt that she must have a blessing from Him on whatever she might undertake. When we pray earnestly to God, in childlike trust and confidence, fearing to take one step alone, He never leaves us without an answer. Whilst Helen was waiting for a reply to her fervent prayer, a remembrance came back to her of a time long gone by.

Ten years before, when she was travelling in France with her brother, as they were crossing Alsace, to return to the Rhine, they thought they would like to ascend one or two of the summits of the Vosges. One Sunday afternoon, they halted on their way towards the mountain, at the village of Tournèges, and found, to their delight, that a Protestant service had been held there for many years. They waited till the bell rang, and then took their way, thankfully, to the village church, where Mr. Clavel's preaching, at once so earnest and so simple, brought back to them the remembrance of the most blessed privileges of their country. After the service, they had waited toshake hands with the pastor and thank him, and he had taken them to his parsonage, where they had spent a delightful afternoon with him and his family, in true Christian enjoyment. The children had played around them, and little Minna had gathered some of her prettiest flowers to make a nosegay for-Helen.

The remembrance of this happy Sunday, the only one which had made that foreign land seem to them like a second home, providentially came back to Helen Wilmore's memory. She seemed to see once more the Gothic church, the avenue of lime trees that led to it, the peasants in their picturesque costumes, with their psalm-books in their hands, the

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peaceful parsonage resting against the hills, the pastor and his wife, who had won their hearts at once.

"They will be good to me, they will feel for me, will they not, O my God?" the poor child said to herself, feeling the world to be almost a desert to her, and she wrote to Madame Clavel. Then she awaited the reply to her letter with great anxiety; for she had only the remembrances of ten years ago to act upon, and what changes might not have happened since then! Great changes had, indeed, taken place at the parsonage, as we know. Helen felt that it was so, as she opened the letter that at length reached her from Tournèges, deeply bordered with black, and saw that it was from the pastor him-Mr. Clavel told her how God had laid his hand upon him also, and turned his happy home into a desolate house. Still he had not forgotten either the Sunday which Helen recalled to his memory. His wife had often spoken of it, and told him how much her heart felt drawn out to the young English girl, and how much she would have liked to see her again. "And now," wrote the pastor, "you and she will never meet again in this world, and no place can be much more sad than my bereaved home. But come to us. I can invite you to do so with more earnestness than if my children had their mother still with them, to teach and help them. You seek for something to do. I will entrust to you the education of my poor little orphans; believing that it is God who has thus recalled the remembrance of us to your mind. Come, and you shall find true friends at the parsonage."

CHAPTER VI.

THE GOVERNESS.

Soon after, Helen Wilmore left England without having had the courage to pay a farewell visit to the pleasant spot where she had been so happy and so beloved. Her heart could not have borne the sight of it, given over to strange hands. The only property she now possessed in England was the grave where her beloved ones lay, beside the church. She wrote to a young village girl who had been fond of her, entreating her to take care of this grave, for her sake; to see that it never fell into the neglect so painful to see, and which tempts one to believe in what is, of all thoughts, the saddest, that hearts that have once mourned, can afterwards forget and neglect.

Helen had still a little money left; not enough to live upon, but enough to secure to her a certain independence. She longed to be able to live alone. It would not be isolation, for she would have friends and duties within reach. Her health had always been delicate, and since her heavy trials, she had suffered so much from weakness, that she did not feel equal to any prolonged exertion. She asked Mr. Clavel, therefore, to allow her to decline, for the present, to become an inmate of the parsonage, and to let her try her strength before undertaking too much of the work which she trusted God was preparing for her, and which she hoped to perform more fully, later. She dreaded the noise and whirl of a large family, at first, and still more did she shrink from what she feared might be a false position with regard to Minna, of whose illness she knew nothing, and who, she thought, might not like to have taken from her any part of the responsibility which she might consider a legacy, left to her by her mother.

When Helen arrived at Tournèges, on a mild day in April, Mr. Clavel had already left for Paris, with his sick daughter. But before leaving, he had rooms prettily and comfortably arranged for Helen, in the little house we have described. The house belonged to the woman who was nursing baby Marie; and she often came there to see her husband, her parents, and her two little children. The whole family of the Simons were devoted to the pastor, who knew that he could trust them implicitly.

These good people received Helen with the greatest kindness and delicacy, and their warm welcome and kind words greatly softened the disappointment and regret that she felt on learning that Mr. Clavel had already been obliged to leave for Paris.

Helen had brought with her several family souvenirs, from which she could never have made up her mind to part; cherished portraits of the beloved ones who had been taken from her hung upon the walls, which Mr. Clavel had had newly papered with a pretty light grey paper. On a little table before the window she had arranged her Bible, a few favourite books, the pretty work-basket, lined with silk, which had belonged to her mother, and some albums filled with sketches, each one of which brought back to her mind the remembrance of some happy sojourn. In the middle of the room stood a round table, which Helen hoped soon to see surrounded by the faces of happy children. She placed on it the same table-cloth which had covered the round table in her own pretty drawing-room in England.

When she had settled all this, which she did immediately on her arrival, in order that she might do all in her power to keep off the feeling of desolation which was stealing over her, she made up her mind to become very fond of her little home at Tournèges. There she would be able to live in peace, enjoying all the comfort that was to be found in intimate communion with God, and in a round of duties which would attach her to this life.

Helen had just come downstairs. It was five o'clock. The shadows were beginning to grow long in the little garden, and the village was resounding on all sides with the happy shouts of children just set free from school.

On the threshold of the door of Helen's house, sat the old grandmother Simon, feeding the baby, whom her daughter had left to go and take charge of the little motherless infant at the parsonage. Helen and the old woman greeted each other with mutual friendliness.

"I hope we shall soon be good friends," said Helen, as she kissed the dimpled hands of the thriving little creature.

She could find her way alone to the parsonage. It led, as we have said, along the shady road, which, a little further on, was lost in the woods. No one knew that she was expected that day; but old Gertrude, who opened the door to her, recognized her immediately, though Helen's face, once so peculiarly bright and joyful, had undergone a sad change since last she had seen her. The good old woman made her come into the deserted drawing-room, and hastened to improve its appearance by opening the

window-shutters, and letting in the sunshine. Then she went to fetch the children. Charlie and Lucy were as shy and awkward as it is usual for children to be at that particular age, when the inclination always seems to be to hide as much of their feelings as they possibly can. Then the baby was brought in nurse's arms, and she went at once to the strange young lady, and began to play with her long brown silky curls. Her smiles and caresses were a delightful welcome for the stranger, who longed to carry her off to her little home, to hug her to her heart, and keep her all to herself. She kissed the elder children, after having arranged that they should come to her tomorrow to begin lessons, and from that day, regular education had been carried on by the young governess and her little pupils. Lucy spent the greater part of her day with Miss Wilmore. Charles was preparing to go to school next year, and during part of the day he shared the studies which Richard Vincent, the doctor's son, was carrying on with a tutor, who for some time had been living at the doctor's house, making his young son study with a diligence and zeal unknown before.

Mr. Henry Frénois was a great acquisition in the village. After working rather too hard at Strasbourg, and passing a brilliant examination for his degree, he had made up his mind to spend a year in

some very retired place, where he could prepare quietly for the ministry.

A tutorship at Tournèges suited him admirably, and both parties had been equally well satisfied with the result of the engagement. The good doctor rejoiced daily in the treasure of a tutor he had succeeded in securing for Richard. It did one good to see what a change for the better had come over both him and his wife since it had been found that it would not be necessary to send their only child to school quite as soon as they had feared.

The two boys spent the morning together with Mr. Frénois, and in the afternoons they joined Lucy in her English studies with Miss Wilmore. Lucy always rejoiced when the time came for "the boys" to come. She and Charlie had been inseparables before these lessons had begun, and she had not yet become accustomed to do without her brother, and besides, lessons with Miss Wilmore were so pleasant! It was a kind of game to see how many words and idioms she could remember. how few faults she could make in exercises and translations. Lucy was the most forward of the three children. At the end of a fortnight she had acquired a really very good English pronunciation, and was often able to laugh at the ridiculous mistakes which the boys sometimes made.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BOYS.

And now that we have introduced our young readers to the principal personages of our little story, we will return from our digressions and go on with what we have to tell them. They will remember that we left off the day after Minna's return home. That day her little sister Lucy had not been looking forward to her English lesson with Miss Wilmore and the boys quite as eagerly as usual. Seated beside her governess in Miss Wilmore's pretty room, she had been continually asking her to look at her little blue enamel watch, and every time that she told her what o'clock it was she exclaimed, "Oh! is it so late?" and bent her little head down again over the work at which her hands were so busy, working away with an energy not very usual to those little hands, browned with the sun, and scratched by the pussy cat and the brambles.

To tell the truth, this was the first piece of work

that Lucy had ever done, or, at all events, the first that had come to anything. Until now Lucy had been in the habit of tearing her frocks and pinafores pretty freely, climbing over walls and up trees, in the garden and in the woods, but she had never succeeded in mending any one of the numerous rents. It is true that her mother used to give her lessons in sewing and knitting, but Lucy hated them, and never gave her mind to them, and consequently learnt nothing in them. Often since Mrs. Clavel's death had she mourned over the thought of these lessons, feeling that they must often have been a trouble to her mother, even after she had already begun to be ill.

Directly it came into her head that she would like to prepare a surprise for her sister when she should come back, she welcomed with delight her governess's proposal that she should make something for her with her own hands, for she knew that this would be just the thing which would have pleased her mother.

The widow Leonard, who, besides keeping the shop, was commissioner in general to the village, and went twice a week to the little town of Thierry, was commissioned to bring back some lamb's wool, rose-coloured and white. Then Miss Wilmore undertook to teach Lucy to make a pretty couvre-pied, which would just do for Minna's room, and match all the other bright and pretty things which had been prepared for

her reception. It was a capital idea, for the poor invalid suffered terribly from cold feet, and always lay with them warmly wrapped up.

But the work was one of some length, and the little workwoman not very skilful. She could not get it done in time, and had been so unhappy about it, that it was to make up for the disappointment that Gertrude had allowed her to run off to the fields and make a nosegay for Minna of her favourite wild flowers.

Helen had sat up late the night before, working at a fringe for the couvre-pied, and stitching together the long pink and white strips. Lessons had been almost entirely set aside for several days. At that moment the kind young governess was sewing on the fringe, whilst Lucy was knitting away at the last strip. The clock in the church tower struck four, and very soon afterwards could be heard in the distance the merry noise of the children coming out of school.

Miss Wilmore and Helen looked up at each other. "The boys will be coming directly, and I haven't finished," said Lucy, anxiously, yet unable to repress a smile of response to the kind look which met hers. "Oh, do let me off my English lesson for to-day, and I will go on with my work in a corner."

"We have missed too many lessons already, dear," said Miss Wilmore; "and I can finish the work quite well whilst you are reading and doing your dictation. We will both be working at once. There is the last bit of knitting done, and I can finish sewing on the fringe."

Lucy got up quite happy. She laid the couvrepied on her governess's lap, and then, throwing her arms round her neck, hugged her with all her heart.

Helen felt that sorrow had indeed been softened for her as she received the caresses of her dear little friend, who was as affectionate as she was lively.

"How hot your head is, my child," she said;
you must have a run in the garden before the boys
come in."

Lucy had scarcely time to give the pigeons some crumbs of the bread she had saved for them from her lunch, before the boys came rushing in, chasing each other up the narrow staircase.

Though Miss Wilmore was growing accustomed to the rough ways of these little wild ponies, she always trembled a little as they came in noisily.

They gave her a "Good afternoon, mademoiselle," which their tone translated into, "What a bother it is to have to sit down here for a whole hour, when all the other fellows are out at play," and then they sat

down so roughly on the chairs prepared for them, throwing down their caps anywhere, that Miss Wilmore asked herself whether she ought to put up with such manners. However, she said nothing, thinking it better to reserve her indignation for graver offences. Lucy, however, coming in breathless after them, exclaimed, in an indignant tone,

"How rude you are! how badly you behave to my dear Miss Wilmore. This time I will tell papa. You see if I won't."

They made a face at her without being in the least alarmed by her threat, for they knew their little playfellow too well to be at all afraid of her telling tales out of school.

The fact was that the boys hated this English lesson, which they thought quite unnecessary, and which just deprived them of the best hour of the day, when, but for Miss Wilmore's lesson, the day's work would be over, and they would be free to play. This unnecessary innovation had given them a kind of grudge against the innocent cause of it. But Helen troubled herself very little about this. Her brother, at the same age, would have been the same. Boys she knew must be boys, and the remembrance of that dear brother and his many little teazing ways, made her love these and bear patiently with them, in the hope that she was already gaining their love and

esteem, even though they would scarcely have allowed it to themselves.

The lesson to-day was rather stormy at first. Charlie upset the inkstand on the table by an impatient movement. Helen's pretty table-cover was badly stained, and Lucy, bursting into indignant tears, declared that "It was a shame, and she hated them, nasty rude boys that they were." They would probably have turned upon her pretty sharply if Helen's wonderful command of temper had not exercised a wholesome restraint over them. The sight of the young governess quietly wiping up the ink, which they knew had injured what she so greatly valued, subdued even their spirits, and they were so quiet during the rest of the lesson that you might have heard a fly buzzing. The history lesson began peacefully. The children read round, turn by turn, and generally the hoy who was reading was the only one who paid any attention. Meanwhile the other one was balancing himself on his chair, yawning continually, or trying to catch glimpses through the window of what was going on in the road below. But to-day they had reached the touching story of the children of King Edward IV., and Helen had succeeded in securing the interest even of the boys. She even fancied that Charlie's voice trembled as he read aloud the beautiful passage she had looked out for him in Shakespeare, in which the narration of the death of the little princes is related by the murderers themselves. Taking the book from him, she finished the passage herself in a voice full of the deepest feeling, and laid the volume down, without appearing to observe that Lucy's eyes were not the only ones full of tears.

Richard Vincent, who had seemed to enter into every feeling of his namesake, escaped suddenly from the room, scarcely waiting to say good-bye in his fear lest any one should observe the effect the reading had produced upon him. Charles Clavel was about to follow him, when, in removing his books from the table, his eyes fell upon the enormous stain which his carelessness had made, and by an immense effort of self-control, he went up to Helen.

"I beg your pardon, mademoiselle," he said, twisting his cap nervously round and round in his hands. "I am very sorry."

Miss Wilmore rose from her seat, and laying her hand on his shoulder, looked at him with so much pleasure and affection that the boy's heart was touched, and he raised a pair of speaking brown eyes to her filled with the same humble, happy expression which used often to delight his mother.

"That is right," she said; "that is manly. It makes up for everything. God knows, Charlie, I

wish to be something very different to you boys than a mere cross, strict English governess."

Charlie waited to hear no more, but hurried off to join his friend, hiding carefully under his light giddy manner the warm little heart which ached with fresh sorrow at anything and everything that recalled to him his darling mother—her sweet words and ways. How she used to speak and look in those evening talks which had been the delight of both their hearts!

"Look at your work now," said Miss Wilmore to Lucy, when the boys had taken their departure, "and tell me whether you like it," and she held up to the child's view the completed couvre-pied. It was lovely, and the child threw her arms round her friend's neck and hugged her again.

Helen took a cambric handkerchief from the wardrobe and packed it up carefully, then giving a small white paper parcel into Lucy's hand, she said—

"I, too, wished to make something for your sister. I have sent her a little marker to put in her Bible. Tell her it comes from me, and that I am very anxious to renew acquaintance with the sweet little Minna who was so good to me long ago in happier days."

And Helen sighed with the truest sympathy as she reflected that in all probability she would never again

see Minna Clavel running about merrily as she had done that day in the Parsonage garden.

"You will come and see her to-morrow, won't you, mademoiselle?" asked Lucy. "She will be quite rested by then."

"You must ask her if she would like it," said Helen.

"Oh! I'm going to ask her at once," replied Lucy.

But as she thought of the deeper gloom which had come over the house since the return of the sister whom they had so eagerly expected, a shadow came over her, and she said—

"Minna seems so very unhappy—so dreadfully unhappy. I think I should be afraid of asking her anything."

"You will see how she is this evening after you have given her your pretty present," said Miss Wilmore, passing her hand caressingly over the child's hair.

Then putting the parcel carefully into Lucy's extended arms, she added—

"Now, don't let it fall, and go carefully."

Lucy did go very carefully down the narrow stairs, and made an effort to walk through the village with a steadiness quite unusual to her general custom, for her habit was to fly along as though she had a mad dog at her heels.

She saw before her the two boys, performing a variety of antics, as they made their way along the road, edged on each side with deep ruts, which led to the Parsonage. There Charlie disappeared, and Richard returned by himself more quietly, and meeting his little playfellow, at the place where the two cross roads and the High Street join, he gave her a pinch on the arm by way of wishing her goodnight. Lucy was too much occupied with her own thoughts to pay much attention to him. him perched on the edge of the basin of the large fountain that stands at the cross roads, pleasantly imbibing, with his mouth under the pipe, the fresh water that flows into it from the mountain. should be afraid to describe it more graphically to any young readers who may happen to be living in a crowded town where, on a sultry day, one must be content with lukewarm water to quench one's thirst.

There Lucy left him still perched, and went steadily on to the Parsonage, knocking a little noisily at the door. She had been thinking of at least a dozen different ways of best effecting her entrance into her sister's room, and had tormented her little head by imagining over and over again in what manner it would be most advisable to present her offering to the invalid.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COUVRE-PIED.

NOTHING could be pleasanter or prettier than the approach to the old wooden and green painted door of the Parsonage, which opened under a perfect canopy of green. Two acacia trees, loaded with blossom, white and yellow, grew on each side of it, and spread their beauty over it. The house was very old, built to the right of the road, and turning one of its narrow sides towards it, in which was only one window, that of Charlie's room. An old beech tree, surrounded at its root by some pretty basketwork, filled with geraniums, sent its branches right up to the window of his bed-room.

The opposite end of the house, as we have already seen, looked towards the mountain. It was not so close, however, as to lose any of the warmth or light from the first rays of the morning sun, which rose between two woody summits, and seemed to understand perfectly that one of its very first daily tasks would be to lighten up the room and cheer the heart of a sick

girl. Alas! up to the present time its endeavours had failed terribly to produce any result. The front of the Parsonage, which was grey with age, though without presenting any appearance whatever of a neglected house, overlooked a court, adorned with flower-beds and gravelled, whilst the back opened upon a flower-garden, leading to a meadow, bordered in the distance by high poplar trees.

The two servants, Gertrude and John, were busy over their work. Gertrude was ordering about as usual, and John receiving her orders, and even obeying them very submissively. He respected in her the faithful and devoted friend of the family, who never preached what she did not herself vigorously practise-whose constant example of self-denial and diligence was indeed her best sermon. Besides, in order not to appear to be taking too much upon herself, Gertrude had adopted of late a way of ordering and advising which would have made John or any of those about her ready to run to the other end of the world, "That was how the mistress always liked it. That is what the mistress would wish. is what the mistress always did." The name of the good clergyman's wife, for whom all yet mourned at Tournèges, and whom John had learned to love when he was only a little boy, acted still as a charm with him, and with most people. It was out of regard for her that John carefully planted and cherished the fairest flowers in the beds which she had herself laid out. So it was out of regard for her that all within and without the house was kept so beautifully, and that the old house and its belongings still retained the same air of cleanliness and comfort for which they had been conspicuous when she lived there. She had ruled with such a gentle power, that its influence was still felt, though her presence had passed from them. But we are digressing again.

It was the nurse, with baby in her arms, who opened the front door of the Parsonage in obedience to Lucy's impatient knock. Baby was for springing at once, with extended hands, into her sister's arms, but for the first time in her life Lucy withdrew from her embraces, and took care to keep her precious parcel well out of reach of her little sister's grasp. She was about to pass on as quickly as possible into the house, when Charlie, who was romping about in the courtyard, busy just at that moment throwing pebbles at the nose of the patient old Pyrrhus, called out to her in an ominous tone—

"I advise you not to go near Minna's room."
Lucy stood as if petrified.

"Why not? What's the matter?" she asked.

"Only that I was unlucky enough to wake her by going into the room, and she received me like a dog, and worse than a dog, when I was going to her with the express desire of amusing her, and keeping her company."

And Charlie went on with his game of romps with Pyrrhus.

Lucy ran to look for old Gertrude, whom she found in the kitchen shelling peas.

Gertrude did not seem particularly well pleased either. Perhaps, however, this was because it was Saturday, on which day she imposed an extra amount of work upon herself, rubbing and polishing every individual thing in house and kitchen until the whole place shone like a drawing-room. In former days the children never set their foot in the kitchen on a Saturday, knowing well they would soon hear that no one wanted them there, getting in everybody's way. But that had been in the days when old Gertrude knew well that any rebuff of hers would be speedily smoothed by a caress from their mother, and that if she drove them away, they would find a welcome elsewhere. But since there had been no mother to receive their confidences and endure their teazings, Gertrude had never been known to turn a deaf ear to them at any time, even on Saturday. She generally seemed now to be the merriest amongst them, for, self-sacrificing in this as in other things, old Gertrude shed her tears, and breathed her sighs

when there was no one to see or hear, or be troubled by them. She needed more help and sympathy than any one, for it was she who had to look after everything and see to everybody.

But she said to herself that the work of her life was to carry other people's burdens, and especially those of the children. And for herself—well, she had a Father up in heaven, and He would help her to carry hers. That afternoon the burden of Minna's trial, to which was added the grief of not being able to do anything to lighten it, was weighing pretty heavily upon her. Seated at the large oak table in the kitchen, shelling her peas, her thoughts were busier than her fingers.

It was just beginning to get dark when Lucy came in very gently, and, stealing up to her old nurse, laid her parcel on her knees, and then proceeded to throw back the covering.

"Look, Gertrude," she said.

"Miss Lucy!" exclaimed Gertrude, "you never made that yourself."

"I did though," said Lucy, her soul reviving within her, with the old woman's admiration. "Miss Wilmore helped me a little to-day, but only about the fringe. I knitted every bit of it myself."

Gertrude could scarcely believe it, and frightened poor Lucy not a little by the way in which she would touch the wonderful piece of work with fingers which Lucy did not consider at all irreproachable enough for such a purpose.

"And so this has been the surprise that you have been working away at in secret? Well, I'm sure you may well be grateful to Miss Wilmore, for I never could have believed you could have been taught to work like this. Are you going to give it to Miss Minna, now?"

"That's just what I came to consult you about," replied Lucy, rather anxiously. "I was going to give it to her this very moment, but Charlie says I had better not go near her. What's the matter, Gertrude? Charlie seems very angry about something."

"Poor little fellow," said Gertrude, "I'm sorry for him; he was coming in so merrily as if the house could never be sad with him in it. He ran upstairs whistling, and opened Miss Minna's door a little too quickly, and unfortunately she had just fallen asleep. I think, though, she scolded him a great deal too much, for he only did it from thoughtlessness. But one can't be too careful with sick people."

"Mamma would not have been angry if we had done it to her," said Lucy; "she always was so kind to us whenever we went into her room, and I'm sure we made noise enough sometimes. Oh, how sorry I

am now when I think about it Gertrude," continued the child, after a little hesitation. "Do you think Minna will ever be like mamma?"

"I hope so, dear," said Gertrude, getting up to put her peas on the fire. "An elder sister ought to take the mother's place with the little ones left in the nest. God means it to be so, no doubt. But I dare say it will come. Poor Miss Minna! She's too sick just now to think much about you."

The old servant walked about the kitchen doing one thing and another, and Lucy followed her wherever she went, even to the coal-cellar, and the place where they kept the potatoes, the white parcel lying unheeded on the table.

"I do want mamma so much. I want her this evening so dreadfully," she said at last, and burst into tears.

Gertrude turned round, caught the child in her arms, and did the same. Then, catching sight of her master coming into the kitchen to give her some order, she caught up a can, and escaped to the back yard to fetch some water from the pump.

Mr. Clavel found Lucy standing alone in the middle of the kitchen, drying her eyes. He asked no questions, but lifted her up in his arms to kiss her.

"I did not know you had come in, papa," she said. "Can I go and see Minna?"

"Not this evening, darling," said Mr. Clavel, without suspecting how much he was disappointing the child. "She has been very feverish all the afternoon, and we must keep her very quiet, to try and let her have a good night."

"Oh, but, papa, I had been preparing such a surprise for her."

"Please to see, sir," said Gertrude, returning at this moment, with composed face and her usual cheerfulness of manner; "please to look at what Miss Lucy has been making, and see how quickly she has learned to work with the nice young English lady."

And she unfolded the couvre-pied.

"What, did you do that!" exclaimed Mr. Clavel.
"Why, my little Lucy must be a fairy, or is it Miss Wilmore who is the fairy? Either way, this is a wonderful thing. And if this is intended for Minna, she ought to be pleased, and surely must be pleased.
.... All the same, my darling," he added, again kissing the child, "I think you had better wait patiently until to-morrow. Better to choose one's time, and let the surprise answer well. I want you, Gertrude, to get supper ready as soon as possible, and tell John I shall want the carriage directly after-

wards. I must go to the Black Valley this evening. John tells me that a message has come for me while I have been out, to say that the farmer is very ill. I hear that Mr. Vincent has gone back with the farmservant who came over to fetch us both; but I have been all the way to Liguges, and have only just now had the message."

"It's a mercy it's a moonlight night," was Gertrude's remark, as the pastor left the kitchen, "if master means to go to that horrible place, over those nasty break-neck roads."

The place which Gertrude thus stigmatized, was, notwithstanding its unpleasant name, a very pretty and fruitful valley, about six miles from Tournèges, which runs along the foot of the Vosges, and is lost between two chains of hills. Though barren and rocky at the summit, these hills, half way up, are richly clothed with vegetation, their sides adorned with cultivated land, which offers the richest pasture for the flocks which graze there in abundance. deep valley winds along, assuming a wilder aspect as it goes, until it reaches a rocky platform where stands a farm, which formerly belonged to one of the castles of the middle ages. Nothing of this castle now remains, save one old tower in ruins and some ivy-covered walls, standing upright under a mass of dark rocks, which form a background to the picture.

The owners of this place, which is a curious mixture of gloom and beauty, never dreamed of living here except in the summer. The same family had farmed the land for them for generations back; and the old farmer, Christopher, who was now on his death-bed, was to be succeeded by his son, who had been brought up on the place, and would inherit his father's post, and with it his energy and honesty.

Lucy did not pay any attention to Gertrude's remark. She began to cry again, when her father had left the kitchen.

"And now papa says I mustn't give it to-night; and I had set my whole heart upon it. I believe we are never going to be happy ever again."

And the expression of the poor child's face was enough to touch a harder heart than Gertrude's.

"Come now," said Gertrude; "you shall sit on my lap for a minute or two, and I'll see what can be done."

Gertrude always managed to think of the right thing, and she knew so well how to take the child, that a few minutes after, Lucy was to be seen jumping up and down the kitchen, helping to get supper ready in a great hurry, with a light heart.

Charlie's troubles were forgotten also, as soon as his father told him, at supper, that he might come with him on his journey that evening; and that he

would allow him to drive as far as the opening into the Black Valley. Lucy watched them set off, in the little mountain carriage; Charlie holding the reins, and touching Nestor with the end of the whip, as he cracked it in quite a professional style. Mr. Clavel sitting beside the boy on the front seat. After they had gone, she stood for a few minutes on the threshold of the door, and then jumped up to reach one of the sweetly-scented branches of the acacia trees. She liked to listen to the pleasant music of the wind, and let it breathe upon her flushed face and swollen eyes, as it came to her fresh from the woods and hills, watching, meanwhile, the first stars of the evening, as they appeared in the sky, from which the last colours of a lovely sunset were gradually disappearing.

Then the child, who had been learning to think since she had learnt to suffer, suddenly became a child again and ran off to the nursery. The nurse was undressing the baby and warming its little rosy feet by the bright flames of a wood fire, which was still lighted of an evening. The baby all the time was screaming for joy as though determined to overcome the sadness which she could not understand, and delight the whole house. The fun was considerably increased by Lucy's arrival, and the baby thoroughly entered into all her merry tricks and ways. The

nurse let them play together until the fire was nearly out, and the room was getting dark and cool, when she declared they had played long enough, and it was time to put her little pigeon to sleep. Just at that moment Minna's bell rang, and soon after Gertrude came to tell them that Miss Minna wished to say good-night to the baby before she was put to bed.

"You shall come too, my darling," she said to Lucy.

"Did Minna say I might?" the child asked, anxiously.

"She only spoke about baby, but the fever has left her so weak this evening that this does not show that she has forgotten you. Come, now; you must not be jealous of a baby whom every one spoils."

"You may go, nurse. I'd rather wait till tomorrow," said Lucy, her heart sore with the feeling that she had been forgotten, whatever Gertrude might say.

She followed Gertrude downstairs, helped her to dry the supper things, and after a little while again overcame her troubles, and was chatting with her old nurse about her lessons and all sorts of things.

Minna was feeling more hopelessly ill and more utterly miserable than ever that evening. She had scolded her brother and accused him of not having any heart, though she knew perfectly that it was just

his boyish way, and that perhaps he had only come into the room so quickly because he had been in such a hurry to see her after having been out the whole Her father had come in a little later intending to tell her about his different visits to his parishioners in the hope of amusing her, and leading her to take some interest in the occupations which he had been obliged for so long to neglect for her sake. She had received him so coldly, and had been so silent and sulky, that he, discouraged and dispirited, had shut himself up in his lonely room. At about half-past eight o'clock Gertrude had come to help her to undress, and after she was in bed, the fever having left her, she felt as if she should sleep. The poor girl, so dissatisfied with herself, so intensely miserable in her own heart, yet refusing to see or confess the unhappy state of mind which was making her trial so bitter to herself, and to all those who were seeking by every means in their power to lighten it, worn out with fever of body and misery of soul, fell asleep before the old nurse had quite finished all her preparations for the night. The old woman left her and went down to her other darling, whom she found alone in the dining-room ready to fall off her chair ` with drowsiness.

"Come along," said her good old friend, "I've a still better idea in my head now than the one I told

you of before. See! I've got your pretty present here. We'll take it up now. Only don't do like Master Charles," she added, as Lucy jumped up, wide awake at once and ready to make a rush at the door. "Miss Minna is asleep again. It would spoil all if we were to wake her."

She took the child by the hand, and they went upstairs together, walking on tip-toe along the passage, lighted now by the fantastic rays of the moon.

Gertrude had left Minna's door ajar on purpose. They stole in and drew near the bed like shadows. The old woman unfolded the wrapper with the greatest care, and gently laid upon the sick girl's feet the pretty pink and white couvre-pied, which would look lovely by daylight. Though its effect could certainly not be discovered by the dim light of a night-lamp, Lucy's imagination could picture it very easily, and her heart beat high at the thought of the pleasant surprise that would greet her sister's eyes next morning.

Just as she was longing to give Minna one gentle little kiss, the sick girl moved slightly, and Gertrude and she escaped like criminals to the old room close by, which used formerly to belong to the three children, but where Lucy slept alone since Minna's return.

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When Gertrude left her that night sound asleep, her rosy smiling face lying in a perfect framework of fair locks, she prayed with all her heart that the next day would bring her the happy waking of which she believed she was dreaming.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BLACK VALLEY.

It was ten o'clock before our travellers reached the Black Valley. The recent rains had made the narrow and badly-kept roads almost impassable, and they had been obliged to watch every step of the old horse with the greatest care, for on one side of them was the deep bed of a torrent which the summer sun dried up, but which in the spring flowed down from the mountain with dangerous rapidity. Passing on to the plain below, the stream of which we have already spoken in the beginning of our story, had swollen into a river which at this moment would have been of quite sufficient importance to have deserved a place in geography. At last, when the pastor's carriage had dipped down into the still narrower gorge at the end of the valley, and taken a sharp turn into the steep road which led to the farm, lights could be seen moving about rapidly in the old buildings, apparently carried to and fro by people in considerable agitation of mind.

Some one appeared on the threshold to receive the pastor, who was usually welcomed with a volley of joyful acclamations. It was an old woman, holding a candle in her trembling hands. Her wrinkled face, pale with agony, lighted by the flickering rays of the candle, her bent figure, the incoherent words, broken with sobs, which her white lips tried to utter, completed the terror that had been growing upon poor little Charlie during the latter part of the perilous journey which they had been making through this gloomy valley.

The old woman came up to the horse, and wished to unharness it herself.

"Don't you do it, Margot," said Mr. Clavel; "ask your son to come and help my boy, though I believe he could do it alone. And how is your good husband, Margot?" he asked, as they stood together by the carriage. "And so he is going first to his rest. I trust he is happy. I hope I am in time to see him once more."

She held up her hands despairingly, and sank back on the bench in front of the door.

"Oh, it isn't Peter," she cried; "it is not Peter. Would that it were he, or I."

"Not Peter!" exclaimed Mr. Clavel, "then who is it?"

At that moment a young woman came up, with

a little child of four years old clinging to her dress.

"Oh, come, come quick," she cried, "he is trying to speak, and I can't make out what he says."

Old Margot jumped up from the bench, and almost dragged the pastor into the house.

"My son is dying!" she cried. "My boy, my Frederic! Oh my God! my God!"

In the best room, stretched upon the old fourpost bedstead, lay Frederic. His old father was beside him, holding his hand. His young wife, so soon to be left a widow, had already returned to her post and was wiping the perspiration from his brow which was stained with blood. The doctor was standing at the table preparing a draught which he hoped might relieve his sufferings, though it could not save his life. From time to time, groans of mortal agony were heard, from the dying man himself, and from those watching beside him.

Mr. Clavel leant over the bed to try and catch the words that came from his lips, but he could not make them out—they were but a low, confused sound. Frederic fixed his eyes upon one after another, and made fresh efforts to speak. Then, exhausted, he seemed to resign himself to the impossibility, and drew down the hand which his wife had laid upon his head, placing it on his heart, and closing his eyes. In a few minutes his painful breathing had ceased, and all was over.

The blood no longer flowed from the poor head, that lay so still upon the pillow. They hoped for a moment that he was sleeping, but Leonore felt that the hand that had taken hers was growing cold, and with a piercing cry she threw herself upon the insensible body of her husband. The poor old mother hid her face in her apron, and her heart-broken sobs were piteous to hear. The little child looked on in bewilderment. She had never before seen the house otherwise than joyful as a hive in summer-time, but when from the great kitchen where the farm-servants were assembled, a sound of sobbing and weeping came louder than that which was going on in the room, the poor child began to scream with terror, without knowing how much cause she had to weep.

Mr. Clavel and the doctor exchanged a few words in a low voice, and then the pastor came forward and offered a fervent prayer to God, on behalf of those whom He had seen fit to visit with such sharp sorrow. He said very little to them, for what is there to be said at such moments, when God appears for the first time as the destroyer of the joys which He has Himself created, and when words, spoken with a view of comforting, only seem to aggravate the trial?

And on this occasion, death had seemed to come as a traitor to take this happy family quite unawares. Could the good God have intended, they asked themselves, to strike them in this way without any warning, without even giving them time to say good-bye, sending back the beloved one struck with death, who had left them so short a time before in all the fulness of his strength, and the beauty of his youth. And then there had been something so dreadful in his death—something which made all those around shudder to think of—something which inspired the hearts of the bereaved mourners by the bedside with a feeling of vengeance, and which made the pastor's task a difficult one. He waited patiently, sharing their sorrow.

At last old Peter arose, with clenched fist. He tottered for a moment, like a tree uprooted by a thunderbolt, and then drawing himself up to his full height, he fixed his eyes on his dead son, and said:

"And so there you lie, my innocent boy—my good, good son, never to speak to us again, and I am to believe that this is the will of God. Ah! the God that could will this, is not my God. I believed that God loved us, and now our house is ruined, our happiness is gone. All is over with us. It is the wicked who has triumphed—it is the wicked who has conquered. If the God of Heaven does not

revenge our wrong, I will find out a way to do so myself. Old as I am, I shall have strength enough left to avenge my dead son;" and going up to little Lisette, he seized her by the arm.

"Tell us about it again," he cried, "since he could not tell us himself; tell us again, child, what you saw."

But the little girl, frightened by the fierce haggard look of her grandfather, only screamed again, and he pushed her angrily from him.

Mr. Clavel went up to the old man, took him by both his hands, and looked fixedly in his face with sorrowing, sympathizing eyes. Old Peter burst into tears. The pastor and he had always been such good friends.

"Oh, sir," he cried, "if you knew—if you only knew, you would not wonder at my words. You would not tell me to submit; I will never submit, never, until——"

"Stop," said the pastor, "say no more, leave it to God. Do you think He holds the guilty to be innocent, or do you think that revenge would be any comfort to you in your sorrow? Let us come and look at him again," he said, drawing the old man once more to the bed.

"Do you think," he added, as they stood there together; "do you think that your Frederic is

meditating vengeance at this moment. I feel sure, for my part, that he had freely forgiven all before he left this world."

By a special and merciful providence, the face of the dead man bore an expression of the most perfect peace. The heavenly smile that rested upon it seemed to tell of the love of God, and to reveal something of the happiness of Heaven, which lasts eternally, and effaces all recollection of this world's wrongs or woes.

Charlie, who until now had been smothering his own sobs in the passage, at this moment stole into the room, and coming up to the bedside, stooped down to kiss the cold face.

"Oh, Frederic!" he cried, "we shall never cut the Christmas fir-trees again together on the mountain, as we used to do, for the feasts that mamma made for us. You, too, are with her in Heaven now."

"Where they keep perpetual feast, and no misfortune can ever come," said the young widow beside him, in a voice firm with the most fervent faith, as she raised her eyes to Heaven, still full of tears, but with the light of hope and resignation shining through them. "If we wish ever to meet them there," she continued, "we must forgive, even as the Lord Jesus forgave—forgave his murderers. Did not God allow his only and well-beloved Son to be put to death by the hands of wicked men? Cannot He understand our sorrow?"

She came up trembling to the old man, and he opened his arms to receive her. She threw herself into them, and their hearts overflowed the one into the other with a burst of mutual sorrow and sympathy which was an intense relief to both.

At a sign from the pastor, the faithful friends and servants withdrew, and left them to find their first comfort in this mutual sympathizing tenderness. Mr. Clavel felt that the gentle ministry of the young woman, whose own heart was the most sorely stricken and broken of all, and yet whose faith and trust in her God stood so firm, was worth more to them at that moment than his or any other.

So they left the three mourners together—the aged father and mother, and the young widow—in the half-darkened room, still grouped around the bed where the dead man lay. Leonore placed the light so that a ray fell distinctly on the face of him whose spirit had passed from earth to Heaven. The fine, strong man, who had been the support of them all, had fallen like a ripe ear of corn under the sickle. Nothing was left to them but these beautiful pale features, which yet remained to speak to them, for a

few short hours, of eternity, and the hope of meeting there.

Mr. Vincent returned to Tournèges in the pastor's carriage. When the worst part of their dangerous journey was accomplished, and they were safely on the high road leading into Tournèges, the travellers could again converse; and Mr. Vincent did not wait to be asked to give all the details he knew about the sad event of that terrible day.

The owner of the property of the Black Valley had written to say that his arrival might be expected in a few days. He had just come of age, and had married a young wife, who was to accompany him in his visit, and who, he said, was very anxious to see this part of his property, the name of which had excited her curiosity. He had also mentioned in his letter that it was probable he might wish to make arrangements for preparing a place to spend the summer in, either by restoring the old castle or building a house near it. All this had taken the good farmers completely by surprise; and Frederic, who always entered energetically into everything, had gone up to the old tower that morning, taking his little girl with him, to see what could be done there.

The morning passed, and twelve o'clock came, the people at work on the farm returned to dinner, but there was no sign of Frederic and little Lisette. They waited some time, and then the old father and young wife set off together to the ruins, not allowing even to themselves that they felt the least uneasiness, saying to one another as they climbed the hill, that when Frederic had the child with him, he never knew how time was passing.

But what a sight met their eyes as they reached the foot of a wing of the wall which still held to the old tower? There lay Frederic upon the green turf, red now from the blood which was flowing profusely from a deep wound in his temple, whilst the child, kneeling beside him, was clinging to his bleeding form with her little arms, and crying amidst her sobs—

"Papa! papa! open your eyes. Oh! papa, come home."

They concluded at once that a stone must have fallen from the top of the tower, and struck the unfortunate man. Stones often did fall amongst the old ruins; they heard them sometimes from the farm, falling with a noise that resounded through the air, as they rolled down to the foot of the hill. But Frederic knew so well what parts of the old walls were dangerous. How could he have ventured near these, and taken the child with him? Still the cause of the accident was evident, and they did not dream of any other. The men from the farm came to carry

the wounded and unconscious man to his home, and Leonore took the child's hand to draw her away from the father to whom she still clung, when the child, raising her frightened eyes to her mother's, said—

"Oh, the wicked, wicked man! He has killed my poor papa. Will he ever come back. Oh, mother, he will never come back, will he?"

Leonore gave one dreadful shriek. The men pressed round the child, and overwhelmed her with questions, but they could get nothing more from the poor little thing than a repetition of what she had said before. At every question she screamed afresh, trembling from head to foot, and looking round in terror, as she cried—

"Oh, papa! papa! he fell down—he was bleeding all over—he fell asleep bleeding."

They looked at each other. All sign of mourning had ceased. With the child's words, and the dreadful suspicions they aroused, their grief became fierce and awful. They spoke in whispers, and none dared mention the name which was in the minds of all, for Frederic had but one enemy in the whole world, and all knew him well. The old man's reason seemed to be giving way, and it was terrible to see him, especially when his son, regaining consciousness for a moment, made an effort to speak, and failed in the attempt. The circumstances of his

death would be buried with him, and no punishment, save the judgment of the God whose eye sees all, would fall upon the assassin whom, notwithstanding, any one of them could have pointed out with his finger. If little Lisette could not tell anything more now, it was not likely that she would be able at a later period to give a more detailed account of the dreadful act of which she must have been a witness. Ah! would to God that Frederic's death had been caused by a stone that had fallen from the tower. Then would it, by comparison, have been a trial possible to bear. They would not have murmured then, they said to themselves, against the will of God, which had cut him off in his youth and beauty, and called him suddenly to heaven. But now, now it was otherwise.

All along the road did the worthy doctor and the good pastor go over and over every circumstance they either knew or could imagine concerning this terrible business.

Meanwhile old Gertrude and the man John were anxiously awaiting their return in the Parsonage kitchen, and to them also the night appeared long and gloomy, as hour after hour was struck by the kitchen clock, and still the travellers did not come.

Minna happily did not wake. The old nurse went to look at her several times, to make sure that she was still sleeping quietly, and each time that she returned from her room she went out again into the court-yard, and bent her ear to listen for any sound of the carriage. John, who was falling asleep continually over the book which Gertrude had given him to keep him awake, was aroused by the old woman shaking him and saying—

"You really must go out, John, and look up the road. And, stop, you'd better take the lantern; the moon has gone down, just as we were most in want of it."

Whilst poor John was gathering his wits together and shaking himself into obedience, Gertrude continued—

"Now make haste, John. I'm beginning to feel very uneasy. There's been a dreadful accident in the Black Valley, and misfortunes, they say, never come alone. But stop! listen! there they are!"

And there they were! The carriage drove up to the door, and whilst John, in obedience to Mr. Clavel's directions, jumped on the coachbox to drive the doctor on to his house, Gertrude hurried to get ready the bread and butter and hot tea which she had prepared.

But she very soon perceived that it was indeed something dreadful that had happened. Charlie's face, as he bent over the fire, which was burning brightly in the large kitchen fireplace, was as white as a sheet. Mr. Clavel seemed to have had some great. shock.

Gertrude soon heard the whole story, and she shuddered in her turn, and a strange feeling of dread took possession of her, as the wind began to whistle and groan around the house. Then John returned, quite overcome, and furious at the tale he had heard from the doctor, and declaring, in his indignation, that he should like to set out that instant in search of the villain of whom little Lisette had spoken.

Gertrude led off Charlie to bed herself, as soon as she had succeeded in making him eat something, and would not leave him until she saw that he really was going to sleep.

Long after the pastor had gone to his room, he might have been seen engaged in earnest prayer for those who had been so terribly tried that their hearts were tempted to the direst vengeance. He did not lie down to sleep that night until daylight, after praying yet more fervently still for the poor lost and guilty soul to whom he felt that he was especially called to minister. This was the most solemn and the saddest hour that he had ever yet known in all his ministry, and he must go through it alone.

CHAPTER X.

CONFLICT AND REBELLION.

IT often happens, in June, after a cold and showery night, that the sun rises bright and warm, and dissipates the clouds that seem to be prepared with fresh showers. Thus baffled, they retire to the horizon, and there bide their time, which will probably be Then they again venture forth into the about noon. sky, and spreading themselves over it like a dark and gloomy veil, succeed in eclipsing their former conqueror, the sun, and in reducing to silence the sweet songs of the birds, and the merry laughter of the children, which his presence had evoked. But the birds and the children never look forward to the coming misfortune, and on the bright morning which followed the melancholy night of which we have been writing, everything seemed to have recovered its usual gaiety, and to be laughing and smiling in the sunshine. They paid no heed to the clouds, that

had retired for a while, holding themselves in readiness, however, as they hung around the horizon, to come forward at the first opportunity, and overcast all once more.

Lucy was still sleeping in her room, which was flooded with a bright daylight, when Gertrude came in and woke her with a kiss. The good woman had put on a cheerful face, and driven away, for the time, all the terrors of the night; but they, too, were like the clouds, and hung on the horizon.

What was the use of spoiling the happiness of children, and making them sad the moment they awoke? So Gertrude took away, laughingly, the little sleeper's pillows and blankets, and made her get out of bed, for she was still heavy from her last night's vigil.

"Have you had a good night after your busy day yesterday, my darling?" she said; "the sun is quite high up in the sky by this time, and baby has been out in the garden ever such a while. She's been there for more than an hour, playing on the grass with the wee wees, as she calls the birds. And Miss Minna is having her breakfast. She's making quite a good breakfast this morning. I believe the pretty couvrepied has got something to do with that. Come, dear, make haste, for she wants very much to see you."

Whilst Gertrude was talking, Lucy had woke up thoroughly, and made great progress in her toilette, and now she begged her old nurse to do her hair for her this morning, that she might be ready The children never found it very hard to make Gertrude do what they wanted, and she had soon brushed out Lucy's long fair locks, and plaited them in two broad tresses, tied at the end with bows of black ribbon. Then Lucy put on her black frock, which was still made child-fashion, showing her dimpled neck and arms, and her little white linen apron. Fastening round her neck the black velvet to which hung the gold locket with her mother's hair in it, which she always wore, she ran down to her sister's room, looking as sweet and fresh and happy as her dear mother herself would have wished to see her.

Minna was sitting up in her bed, propped up with pillows. She held out her arms to her sister with quite a sweet smile, and Lucy, as she threw herself into them, felt perfectly happy.

Then looking with real affection at the child, as she stood, with beaming countenance beside the bed, Minna said—

"It was very good of you, Lucy, to have prepared such a beautiful surprise for me. I could not believe, when I woke this morning, and saw that lovely couvre-pied on my bed, that it was really you who had made it; could I, Gertrude?"

"She must have taken a great deal of trouble to learn how to do it so quickly," said Gertrude, "and must have worked very hard to get it done. The pretty rose colour seems to have made you look better this morning, and the room looks like a nosegay."

Minna sighed. The contrast struck her painfully. She passed her thin fingers through the pink and white fringe.

"How could you learn so quickly, Lucy?" she asked.

"Oh, Miss Wilmore took such trouble to teach me," replied the child. "She is such a darling, Minna. I can't tell you how I love her."

And running out of the room, she came back a moment afterwards, and put into her sister's hand the elegant book-mark which Miss Wilmore had embroidered for her.

"She sent it to you, Minna. She told me to ask you to put it in your Bible. But where is your Bible?"

And Lucy looked in vain on the table, and in the room.

"Didn't you read it last night?" she asked, innocently.

"Gertrude has put it away with my other books. They are not yet properly unpacked," said Minna, without wishing to show that she was annoyed; and still holding in her hand the white silk book-marker, on which was embroidered in blue silk the text, "I give you my peace."

"Was not it kind of Miss Wilmore to make it for you?" said Lucy, her heart full of her beloved governess. "She remembers so well seeing you when you were not so old as I am now, and she wants so much to see you again. I may tell her to come to-day, mayn't I?"

"I'm never in a hurry to make new acquaintances," said Minna, putting the book-marker down. "You might remember, Lucy," she added, seeing the look of disappointment on her sister's face, "that when people are ill, they don't care about seeing strangers."

At this moment the conversation was interrupted by Mr. Clavel, who came into the room, and, with an expression of pleasure on his face at finding the sisters together, kissed them both, and sat down by Minna's bedside.

"Oh, papa!" exclaimed Lucy, forgetting both her satisfaction and disappointment for the moment, "is the old farmer at the Black Valley dead?"

"No, my child," said Mr. Clavel; "it is far

more sad. It is Frederic who has been taken—our good Frederic, whom your dear mother loved so much. He was always such a good scholar, such an honest, manly lad, such a devoted son to his poor old parents, such a tender husband to Leonore, and such a kind father to their little Lisette. He has been killed under the wall of the old castle. I have spent a sad night, my darlings, while you, I hope, have been sleeping quietly. If you had seen Charlie, he would have told you all about this melancholy business."

But Charlie had gone off to the village, with his books under his arm, a good hour earlier than usual, anxious, with boylike impatience, to know what was being said in the High Street there; to hear all the exclamations of wonder, and horror, and suspicion; and then to be able to tell all that he knew himself, and to describe the scene which he had witnessed.

"What were you talking about when I came in?" said Mr. Clavel.

Then, looking from the bright couvre-pied on the bed to Lucy's face, he added, "Surely, our little woman here ought to look happier after having made such a lovely present as this for you, Minna?"

"It was very good of her, certainly," said Minna, "and I'm very much obliged to her; only I wish she would not teaze me by asking me to see strangers.

I think she might know that I don't like to see anybody—that I want to be left quite alone. Nobody seems to understand me," she added, in a fretful and upbraiding tone.

Lucy began to cry. She was wondering how she should ever summon up courage to tell Miss Wilmore that Minna would not see her. Helen had been so sympathizing about Minna's illness, and had taken so much trouble in helping her to prepare her surprise for her sick sister, that she felt as if she never could tell her what Minna had just said, when she knew, too, that Helen prayed for Minna every day.

Mr. Clavel did not care to argue the matter with his elder daughter, knowing well how useless this would be; so he merely said—

"I should not have believed this of you, Minna. All I can say is, that you are depriving yourself of a most valuable friend. The absence of any friendly welcome from you will be a cruel trial to this poor stranger, who has been looking forward so eagerly to your arrival. And, besides, I really can't understand your not wishing to see her. Setting aside this fresh proof of her kindliness of disposition and good feeling towards you, I should have thought that you, as an elder sister, would have wished to thank her for all she has been doing for Charlie and Lucy

while we have been away. She has been the kindest of friends to Lucy."

"I believe Lucy loves her better than she does me," murmured Minna.

She regretted the words as soon as they were uttered; for she saw, by the expression of her father's face, how much they had grieved him.

He got up at once, saying, "My poor child! if God does not teach you submission—if you determine in this way to reject all our love and sympathy, and to refuse to allow us to offer you any comfort, I am sure I don't know what is to become of us all."

Mr. Clavel left the room. An instant afterwards, Minna heard the great gate open, and the carriage draw up and drive away—Pyrrhus barking with all his might, meanwhile, in his efforts to break his chain and follow. Her father had gone off again to the desolate farm in the Black Valley.

"Miss Lucy," said the nurse, coming in at that moment with little baby Marie, "there's a message come from the English lady to say she is very sorry she can't give you your lessons to-day, as she's ill in bed."

Lucy was out of the room and downstairs in a moment to hear more about it.

"I can't keep the baby this morning," said Minna, fretfully, and scarcely giving the child the kiss which the nurse held her up to receive. "Take her away."

The nurse carried her off, saying to herself that certainly illness did not improve the temper; and Minna was once more left alone.

The pretty room, which all had done their best to make so comfortable and cheery, and which they had hoped would prove the family meeting-place, where all would bring the tenderest sympathies and warmest affections, remained cheerless and desolate. The unfortunate girl, who might have been, through this illness, the centre of all the family love, the object around which all would gather closest, was shutting herself out, by her own rebellious will and bitterness of soul, from all the blessings folded within this very trial. Turning thus voluntarily from the caresses and the consolation of those who loved her so dearly, she hid her face in her hands, and wept bitterly over the loneliness and desolation which she was creating for herself.

CHAPTER XI.

MAX CRONER.

THE loving hearts whom Minna had so roughly discouraged and driven away from her did not return to her for some time. All that day she saw no one except Gertrude. The faithful old nurse was as devoted and as patient as ever in the care she took of her, but she did not seem to enjoy her work as she had done the day before. The nurse kept the baby out of the way. The house was as dull as an abandoned bee-hive. Nothing was to be heard in it except the old servant's steady step as she went from room to room, doing the usual house-work, and the sound of John's hoe as he weeded the garden. From time to time the two servants exchanged a word, as Gertrude's avocations led her outside the house, or John's brought him inside, and when they did so it was always on the same subject—the sad event of the previous day. John had begun the day this morning,

not as a peaceful farm-servant and gardener, but as a herald of justice, sounding the war trumpet. He had been the first to inform the villagers of Frederic Siberg's tragic death, and the suspicions of all fell, with murmurs of revenge, on one and the same individual. Crowds of people from the village went out to the Black Valley, where the mourning family received the sympathizing visit of hundreds, all vowing that the murdered man would not want arms to avenge his death. But sympathy of this kind only sent a fresh flood of bitterness into the broken hearts, who were ready at last to listen to him who came to speak of peace. The pastor read of Jesus, spoke of Jesus, prayed to Jesus; and kneeling beside the peaceful corpse of his only and beloved son, old Peter vowed that he would banish from his heart every thought of vengeance, since Jesus, on his cross of agony, had forgiven those who had hated and crucified Him. The poor old man's heart was melted, and he shed tears from which all bitterness was gone, as he held out his hand to the pastor, whose ministry had led him to the foot of the Saviour's cross, and filled him with a desire to follow in the Saviour's steps. He begged the good minister to forgive him the sinful words he had uttered in the first shock of his great sorrow, and then broke forth into a prayer for repentance, beseeching God to forgive him, and praying also for him who had hated his good, his beloved son, and who had deprived his old age of its own crown of rejoicing. God had given His only Son over to a cruel death. He knew all the agony, and would strengthen him to bear and to forgive.

When Mr. Clavel left the old farm, the setting sun was wishing its last farewell to the valley, and, as it were, touching every cottage and tree with a golden caress, and tipping the hills with gold on all sides. The tranquil scene harmonized well with the peace that had fallen from heaven into the hearts of the inhabitants of the Black Valley. No one spoke now of revenge. The villagers wended their way back to Tournèges in silent groups. The more intimate friends of the poor Siberg family remained with them at the farm to spend the last night beside Frederic, and attend the funeral next day.

Charlie and Richard Vincent, with their tutor, Mr. Frénois, were waiting for Mr. Clavel in the road, at the bottom of the valley. The children were amusing themselves by throwing stones to try and dam the waters of the mountain torrent, which were dashing down rapidly, and setting their tiny attempts at defiance. Mr. Clavel, after having told them all they wanted to know about the Sibergs, gave up the carriage to them, saying he would rather walk home.

Nestor set off at a sharper trot with the more juvenile load behind him, and the pastor was left alone on the road, which was heavy with the recent rains. Overhead, the clouds were dispersing in snowy flakes, or forming themselves in the distance into chains of fantastic mountains, whose roseate and violet hues were reflected in the plain. could be heard but the rushing of the torrent, and the distant sound of the water-mill in the meadow. Mr. Clavel, who had been himself so discouraged that morning, now felt his soul raised above all the conflicts, all the disappointments of life. A blessing from above had fallen on his ministry. He thought that he could willingly drag on his weary life some years longer, if God would grant him to see more such victories won by the gospel of pardon and peace which he preached. These afflicted people had understood that they must follow their crucified Saviour's example to the end; it had not been in vain that he had spoken to them, and this great trial was bringing forth fruits of the seed faithfully planted, day by day, though often with a downcast heart.

Before going back to the Parsonage to seek the repose of his study, Mr. Clavel wished to pay a visit to Miss Wilmore.

He was not surprised to find Lucy with her, seated beside her dear governess's bed. She had

been there all day, only coming home for dinner, and hurrying back as soon as possible. It was the happiest day she had spent for a long time, hemming handkerchiefs for her sister, writing exercises which she set herself, as a surprise to Miss Wilmore, and getting up occasionally to ask her how she felt, kiss her, and assure her that she loved her with all her heart. From time to time, too, she went down into the kitchen, with the important air of a sick nurse, to ask good Mrs. Simon for a cup of tea, or some broth for her patient. Miss Wilmore did not like keeping the child shut up all day, and had tried to make her run away several times. When she saw, however, that her heart was set on remaining to nurse her, and perceived also that the return home would not be a very pleasant one, she let her do as she wished, seeing how happy it made her. For her part, the child's presence made this day a happy one to Helen herself, though it was full of suffering and A smile of welcome from Lucy was weakness. always in readiness to greet her whenever she opened her eyes after dozing for a time, and dreaming that she was once more in the old home, and that her own dear mother had been smoothing her pillow.

Lucy had read to her one of her favourite psalms, and as she came to the last verses, and closed the book, she said, gently, that this had carried her back to the past, and the tender love of her own mother.

"It is like being with dear mamma again."

Thus, this day of mingled sunshine and shade passed quietly away, and the room was full of the last rays of the setting sun when Mr. Clavel came in.

"Papa!" cried the child, running to meet him, and throwing her arms round his neck.

He made many anxious inquiries about Helen's illness, and regretted very much that she was not at the Parsonage, where they could attend better to her.

"You have one invalid to mind already," Miss Wilmore said. "I will go when I can be of some use; but it is much better for me to he here, and the good people in this house could not be kinder to me than they are."

"I knew they would welcome you kindly, and do their best to make you comfortable," said Mr. Clavel; "they will be real friends to you. My dear wife had the greatest regard for the whole family, and said she always found them high-minded and refined, as well as kind-hearted and hospitable. I am afraid the religion of some of my people is of rather a sleepy character; but one seems to feel that these people have descended, in a direct line, from the good old Huguenots, whose hearts were so devoted to their

God, that they were ready to suffer the loss of all things, and die rather than renounce any part of the truth which was so dear to them. This was the case with all their ancestors.

"You must tell me some of the past history of your good villagers," said Helen, with a smile. "You know this is to be my second home now. And soon, I trust," she added, "I shall be quite well and strong again, and able to go about and make acquaintance with your parishioners. You have so much to do. I should like to be of some use here—a kind of curate, however unworthy, if you will teach me how to work. Lucy has been telling me of the dreadful catastrophe that has taken place in the Black Valley; how much I wish I could have gone to see those poor creatures. Lucy tells me their hearts are filled with thoughts of vengeance, and, if so, what awful torture they must suffer."

"God has taken these thoughts out of their hearts," said Mr. Clavel, "and has filled them instead with pardon and pity. This has been an awful event, indeed, and yet this day has been one of the happiest of my ministry. I have seen these poor people, overcome by the blessed example of their Saviour, forgiving the murderer of the only son and tender husband, whilst still standing beside his mangled remains."

"Then you know who the murderer is?" exclaimed Helen, in much agitation.

"Alas!" the pastor replied, "he was one of my flock, one of my own catechumens. I have watched the growth of this dreadful spirit of jealousy in his heart; this terrible hatred which he bore towards Frederic Siberg. I was obliged, in consequence, to refuse to allow him to come to the Lord's table: I strove to do it as gently as possible, and without driving him from me, for I longed to help him to fight and overcome the evil spirit that had taken possession of him. But, from that moment, he withdrew from the village, and I have never since seen either him or his parents. They went away, immediately afterwards, to live in a little cottage on the other side of the mountain. You must know," he added, "that an idea exists amongst. many of my people, which arises from their not truly understanding the meaning or the importance of the holy sacrament of the Lord's Supper, that all young people should become communicants when they reach a certain age. According to their idea, it is a matter of years, and not of heart. Max Croner found himself humiliated before his comrades, and shunned by them, after my refusing to allow him to become a communicant, and he grew yet more gloomy and hardened. He went, soon afterwards, to Germany, and learned a trade there, but he had begun, even then, to yield to sinful temptations, and he soon became very wild, and was ruined by dissipation. After his father's death, when he returned to his old mother, I believe because he was starving, he came back in a dreadful state of degradation, worn out in body, and without a farthing to call his own. But I shall tire you by my long story."

"Oh, no," said Helen, deeply interested, "I want to know what made him dislike Frederic Siberg so much."

"Poor Max!" replied Mr. Clavel. "Here the sin of the father fell upon the son. Old Croner had long been dreadfully jealous of Frederic's father, good Peter Siberg, and all the family, merely because they were so prosperous. He had always been unfortunate himself, and he used to give this as an excuse for hating the prosperous Sibergs. He had never been able to make his way in the world; but was only a wood-cutter, receiving very low wages, and was obliged to live in the humblest way. Working constantly in the forest, he used to watch the provender, the golden harvests of the Black Valley, coming in and out for the sustenance of man and beast, and the abundance of others seemed an insult to his own poverty. He learnt to say, as others are foolish enough to say sometimes, that the rich and the happy become so at the expense of the poor and miserable. By and by, old Croner took to scowling and shaking his fist at the members of the family whose prosperity insulted him. 'He was every bit as good as they were,' he would say to himself, 'and he should like to know why they were to take the best part of the country to themselves, from father to son.'

"What he said at first to himself, he said aloud later when his little Max was able to understand it. Even when the child began school, and used sometimes to join Frederic on the way there, he was already prepared to look with animosity on the little schoolfellow who was eating his well-buttered roll whilst he had only dry bread. Meanwhile, Frederic, on his part, was always willing to share all he possessed with Max; he used to invite him to the harvest feasts and to the grape gatherings, and was always looking out for him to show him some kindness, and seek to get him to share his boyish games and pleasures.

"Max was always welcome at the farm. The best of fruits and cakes were given to him there, and he was laden with good things to carry home with him.

"Whenever there was a press of work on the farm, and an extra hand was needed, old Croner was asked to come and help, though he did not do half as good a day's work as another man would have done.

"Frederic grew very fond of his silent and melancholy schoolfellow, just because he thought him unhappy: he was of such a confiding, unsuspicious nature himself that he could not make up his mind to believe what the other schoolboys told him, that he whom he considered his friend was in reality his enemy, and that Max Croner hated him, and would be only too glad to do him an ill turn if he could.

"But after hearing this he redoubled his kindness, until a day came, when they were both young men, and an event happened which would never be forgotten at Tournèges—a day when an attack was made on Frederic Siberg's life by Max Croner. Frederic would probably never have said a word about it, but a labourer, who saw what happened, told the story."

"It was about Leonore, was it not, papa?" said Lucy. "I have heard Gertrude speak of it."

"Yes, Lucy, it is a sad story; and poor, sweet little Leonore is, as you say, the innocent cause of this fearful end to it. She was very young when the boys first knew her, and lived at Burgwald, the little village where poor Frederic is to be buried to-morrow. Frederic was always very fond of her, and even when quite children, he used to speak of her as his little wife. On the day when Max Croner pushed him so treacherously into the torrent, Frederic had been gathering mountain flowers for her, and was endeavouring to reach one which was more beautiful than all the others, and which was growing on the very edge of the precipice.

"Ever since Frederic had shown his affection for Leonore, Max had considered that he had a lawful cause of hatred against him, which he had full right to indulge; for he, too, loved Leonore, and he swore that Frederic should not take her from him. All the evil passions of the Croners seemed let loose after this happened; the two families no longer held any intercourse together, and a short time afterwards Max Croner again went away, refusing all the offers of reconciliation which were made to him by Frederic, who had not yet recovered from the long illness brought on by the dreadful fall which he had had when Max Croner's push sent him headlong down the side of the precipice on the rocks below.

"Max Croner had returned last winter. During his absence all had gone well with Frederic; and on his return Max found that Leonore, now grown into a lovely and graceful woman, had become the wife of him whom he now hated with a yet more deadly hatred than before. "Since his return he had scarcely ever been seen by any one. The passers-by heard the blows of his axe, as he cut down wood in the forest, and occasionally caught sight of his figure in the distance, but he spoke to no one. His presence so near them brought a certain gloom and feeling of dread over the peaceful inhabitants of the farm. Leonore often entreated Frederic not to go out after dark, and would tremble sometimes if she caught sight in the distance of the shadow of the man who she knew bore such a grudge against her husband.

"As for Frederic, he wished to go to the mountain cottage and see Max, and his constant prayer was that God would so melt the heart of his enemy, and take away all his feelings of wrath and envy, that the way might be opened for him once more to offer him his friendship. One could easily understand the heart becoming hardened by misfortune, he would say, and yet more easily could he understand a man's loving his Leonore, and envying him the possession of such a treasure.

"And now," continued Mr. Clavel, "Max has again left the country. His poor old mother was found alone this morning, without a bit of food in the cottage. We must look after her. No one will ever know in what way her son attacked Frederic. Little Lisette will, no doubt, have forgotten all

about it long before she is old enough to tell the story."

"I don't think so," said Helen. "There are some things which never pass from the memory of little children. What she saw yesterday will be before her eyes for ever, though she may never be able to tell more about it than what most struck her childish imagination. I remember my father's death, and I was only four years old at the time; but I can only recall the particulars connected with it which made a special impression on my childish mind."

"Lucy, you must come back with me," said Mr. Clavel, "it is getting dark already. I shall not see you again before Monday, dear Miss Wilmore, for to-morrow is Sunday, and I have a heavy day's work before me. As soon as the morning service is over, I must set off for the Black Valley."

"You are going to rest early, I hope," said Helen.

"They will bring baby to see you to-morrow, if you like," said Mr. Clavel; "her little prattling will cheer you. Whilst I am waiting for you to become my curate," he added, smiling, "I know you will help me very efficiently, without going out of your room, by asking God to bless the witness that I am bearing for Him in my weakness.

The prayers of others, and especially of the suffering, are a great support to those who are working. Children of God confined to their rooms by illness, have a special and very holy work to do for their Master. My poor little Minna does not yet understand this."

He drew a deep sigh as he rose and left the room.

Lucy remained behind to give her governess a last tender embrace, and whisper something in her ear.

"No, not all day; I forbid that," was Helen's reply. "I feel much better this evening."

Lucy overtook her father in the garden, as he was shaking hands with the worthy Simon. The good man was breathing the fresh air after supper, and admiring the progress which his vegetables had made under the genial influence of the bright sunshine after the soft rain. Whilst Lucy slipped her hand into her father's, and set out homewards with him, the good people said to each other that the child was growing up as quickly as a mushroom, and was becoming very pretty, as well as very well behaved.

"If her poor mamma could only see her," said the old grandmother, bending down to kiss the baby and hide the tears that were in her eyes.

CHAPTER XII.

UNDER THE CEDAR.

On the Alsatian side of the mountain, called the Oak Grove, which rises and spreads itself to the left of the Black Valley, like a long curtain, is to be found a clear spot in the forest, where a few cottages clustering together under the shadow of the surrounding trees, form the little village of Burgwald. It was here that Leonore had been born and brought up, and that Frederic had spent many a happy evening after the work of the day was over, with his betrothed wife. A small space of ground, free from trees, and exposed to the sun, offers to the sight a few well-cultivated fields, but round these the forest closes again, gloomier and thicker than ever, and opens no more until it reaches the plain crossed by the Rhine. Just over the village of Burgwald, where the wood is clearest, a low wall, grey and mosscovered, surrounds a small field sparsely covered with

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little mounds and a few black crosses, and it was here that they buried Frederic Siberg. Two months had passed now since the funeral train had wound its mournful way up the little hill, and left their dear one alone in his last resting-place. This peaceful place of repose is very rarely visited, for only at long intervals is a fresh grave made in the quiet cemetery. There are but few inhabitants in the village, and when death lays its hand on one of them, old man or child, as the case may be, it is a sorrow for all, which every one remembers long, and goes into mourning, for they are all more or less connected with one another, being almost all descendants of the same stock.

The farmers of the Black Valley belonged to the parish of Tournèges, but the young widow had entreated that Frederic might be laid to rest in her native village, in a spot which could be within her reach, and in the place where they had been so joyfully married after such a long and happy betrothal.

She went to the little cemetery every evening with Lisette, and remained there till the sun went down, and night was setting in, when the child would begin to feel frightened and would cling to her dress, and beg to be taken home. In this spot, Leonore spent hours in prayer, and in going over and over again in her mind the story of her happy life up to the moment of its tragic end.

Here, in the silence and peace of the eventide, it often seemed to her that her faith grew stronger, and she felt still united to her beloved husband, in spite of the cruel death which made this temporary separation between them, and prevented the enjoyment of their union. No discordant sound came to trouble the quiet of Leonore's great grief. summer there was no holiday at Burgwald. sorrow, this crime, had awed all hearts, and the grief and sympathy were general. The young people no longer met as usual in the little square where the fountain stood, to chat in the twilight, or make love with one another. They no longer dreamed of singing or of dancing. The very thought would have seemed to them a sin, sufficient to call up the ghost of him they mourned. At Burgwald, as at Tournèges, and in all the country round, the horror of the event lived on, and for a long time, the children would wake in the night, crying from fright. For a long time, too, the women would entreat their husbands not to go too near the old ruins in the wood, for "who knows" they would say, "but we may have some enemy there whom we know not of."

Poor Leonore never could bear to have her child out of her sight, although every one believed that Max Croner had left the country, probably for ever. Little Lisette had been the only witness of the crime. She was the only person whom Max had to dread; and as one crime brings another with it, was there not every reason to fear that one day this wretched man might be seized with a horrible desire to close for ever the mouth of the innocent little creature, who alone could declare that it was he, Max Croner, who was the wicked man who had killed her good father, Frederic Siberg.

The old farmer worked alone on the farm now, as he used to do in the early days when Frederic was still a boy at school, and he bore alone the burden and the heat of the day. But, alas! how differently now from then! Formerly his work was lightened all day long by the anticipation of the boy's return home, and of the games of play they would have together. Then when the child came, what joy did he not bring with him, what famous romps in the hay-loft, amidst the hay, what tricks, and games, and kisses, and caresses when evening came-all speaking to the father's heart of a life of happiness and strength in the future. Now he worked steadily, for he must strain every remaining nerve to provide for the family whose only support would soon fail them. when the granaries were once more filled with the golden grain, and the hay-waggons once more came into the yard laden and tottering with the weight of the fresh-made hay, he would hold out his arms to

the little granddaughter, whom the men had hoisted on the top of the fragrant load, and would lift her down to the ground, and kiss her and bless her; but it was all done sadly. To the old man's eyes, the light had gone from the landscape, and he only smiled now when he saw, by faith, the things of heaven. The child was so young, he said to himself, he must leave her long before he could hope to see her married, and Leonore's parents were old too, and soon there would be none to protect them. Under the weight of such thoughts the old man was more and more bowed down each day. ruined tower, surrounded by the crumbling walls of the castle, rose up grave and stern over the grey hill that shut in the valley. Even in her sleep Leonore would shudder at the sound of the stones falling down from the top, and rolling into the deep ravine below, whilst the child would start in her slumber, and cling to her mother with a murmured cry of the wicked man having come again.

At the parsonage of Tournèges, nothing new had happened during the months of July and August, except that the days had grown brighter and warmer since the sun had reigned over them as a conqueror, instead of an invader, and the air was full of the buzz of insects and the song of birds.

This year the summer had been particularly dry

and warm; there had been no rain, the fountains had dried up, and before the autumn had set in, the leaves had begun to change colour, and the flowers to fade almost before they had well opened.

Poor little Marie had begun to languish with them, thrown back by teething just as she was getting on so nicely. She was no longer seen crowing and laughing and prattling to the birds, but lay for hours in her nurse's arms, with her little head on her shoulder. She had grown so pale and thin that one would scarcely have known her for the same child, and she was so weak that she never now tried to stand on her little feet. Minna did not care about having her with her now, the baby was getting spoiled, she always wanted to be carried about, and only liked to be with her own nurse, or with old Gertrude, who sat up with her often all through the night.

Minna had been a great sufferer, and the conflict within was the greatest of all her sufferings; it was as painful as ever, and she struggled incessantly against the trial which had been inflicted upon her youth, and could not resign herself to a dispensation which seemed to her too cruel. If only there had been any hope of its coming to an end; but there was no saying how long her illness would last, and it seemed too hard to bear. She shut herself up within herself, in a gloomy rebellion against the will

of God, which broke out in ill temper on the smallest provocation. The kindness and affection shown her only seemed to sour her still more. She repulsed love and sympathy, and seemed to look upon all the little delicate attentions lavished upon her as so many insults to her afflicted state. She could not, however, succeed in wearying the thoughtful and tender friends around her. Gertrude tended her continually as her petted child.

Her father gave her to understand that he was still looking forward, prayerfully and hopefully, to the happy day when he should find in his eldest child a tender and sympathizing friend, and should receive daily in her sick-room a welcome which should cheer and comfort him after the fatigue and discouragements of the day. He knew well that she would forget half her own troubles if only she could be brought to care for those of others.

But Minna did not choose to understand this. She very rarely responded to his caresses and kindnesses; she did not even observe in his altered countenance the signs of the sorrow and anxiety of which she was herself the cause; it never came into her mind to try and take an interest in his work. And yet if she would only have consented to do so, how much would her own trial have been lightened by sharing, so far as it was possible for her to do so,

the holy occupations in which he was becoming more and more interested. She might have gone with him in heart and spirit to the cottages which she knew so well, and where, as at the Parsonage, sorrow and difficulty were to be met with, which she could have helped to relieve or to remove.

Lucy went on bringing her sister every day a little nosegay, which Miss Wilmore helped her to gather, whilst the flowers were still sparkling with the dew of the early morning, but she never now stayed in Minna's room. Indeed, I doubt whether she would have cared to go there at all if Miss Wilmore had not impressed upon her mind that it was her duty to go up every day and pay her sister a little visit when she came back from her lessons.

Minna scarcely listened when Lucy tried to tell her what she had been doing during the day, and never gave her the smallest encouragement to confide in her any of the childish confidences which she was continually offering spontaneously to her kind and sympathizing governess. Lucy generally found her sitting over the fire, burying her head over a book which she laid aside with reluctance.

Mr. Clavel had brought from Paris a number of new books expressly for Minna's benefit. These were, for the most part, well-written and instructive tales and travels, descriptive of foreign countries and

manners; narratives of interesting places and facts, by those who had seen and taken part in them. He had also brought some lighter books for the purpose of beguiling some of the weary and lonely hours which he knew were in store for his sick child, and which he thought would be pleasant reading for her when her head was too weak to allow of her giving her mind to graver books. But Minna had seized upon these books greedily, and had read them eagerly without exercising the smallest self-control, allowing her imagination to wander at will in the fields of fiction which they opened to her, where she was carried quite away from the realities which she hated, into a new and fanciful world. It was necessary, however, to come back to realities; and after having been living in imagination the life of this or that heroine, Minna found herself entirely deprived of all moral force to cast off the unreal existence with which she had been identifying herself, and take up bravely and patiently her own life of self-denial and sickness.

Alas! there was one book which had no charm for Minna, full as it was of the most interesting narrative, of the richest poetry, and of the most touching descriptions of heroes and heroines.

The little, well-worn Bible, which had been her mother's, lay closed beside her. This precious book,

which would have shown her the happy and glorious life that may be led by living under the shadow of Christ's cross, which would have told her of the love of God, of the sufferings of her Saviour, and the heavenly joys procured for us by his sacrifice: this precious book was of no value in her eyes. never opened save for the few words of daily reading, which did not ease her conscience, and left her heart unsatisfied. Her soul never sought in it for the holy words which would have cheered her drooping spirits, and made known to her the happiness which is to be found in a full trust in God, in the knowledge that He does not willingly afflict or grieve any child of man; and that if He does chasten any amongst them, it is for their profit, and is a proof, not of anger, but of tender and fatherly love.

But a change was at hand. Helen Wilmore now came to the Parsonage to give her daily lessons, and Minna was forced to make her acquaintance. Reluctant as she was to do so, and unwillingly and ungraciously as she received all the young governess's delicate attentions, little by little Helen made her way into the sick girl's favour. Every step forward was a struggle, though one carried on so quietly that none seemed to perceive it, except perhaps by the result, which invariably left Helen conqueror. There was something in the intercourse that existed between Miss

Wilmore and Minna that reminded Lucy constantly of the story that her governess had once dictated to her—the story of the traveller, who had resisted every attempt of the wind to tear off his cloak, only wrapping it the more tightly round him at every freshgust; but who, when the sun came out and shone more and more warmly, was forced at length to yield, and lay the cloak aside. Helen Wilmore was like that sun, and Minna's coldness was becoming very like the traveller's cloak. It was strange, for every one had always been bright and good to Minna; and yet she had not yielded to others as she could not help now yielding to Helen. It must have been the union of sunshine with sorrow and suffering, as well as with youth. The first time that Minna saw the sweet young face, which she remembered having seen once before, in all its untouched mirth and brightness, something in it struck her deeply. There were such manifest marks upon it of sorrow, of suffering, and Helen Wilmore must have gone through sickness. a great deal before her cheeks could have grown so pale, and her eyes so sunken, and her forehead so marked with lines, and her sweet mouth so grave. The roundness of the face, the bright colouring, the laughing eye, were gone; but all the sweetness and peace remained. Thin, pale, careworn as it was, it was none the less happy. On the contrary, the ex-

pression was one of very special happiness-such happiness as perhaps is only known by those who have struggled, and suffered, and walked in furnaces of deep affliction, with the Son of God for their companion. From the first day that they met again, Minna felt that Helen was not like other people; and a very short time afterwards all unwillingness to have Helen as her companion had departed. Before long, Minna's only happy time was the time that Helen spent in her room. Helen insisted on reading to her, and Minna yielded, and listened to the journals which Helen had written herself, describing her own country and its customs, the places which she had visited, and the scenes which she had witnessed there. Sometimes Minna's manner was repelling and disagreeable, and at such times the sun of Helen's kindness shone more strongly than before. Not one word did Helen ever say to her about her murmuring ways, her rebellious spirit, or her discontented state. She never preached to her of the duty of submitting to God's will, or spoke to her of the irritability and ill-temper which made all those around On the contrary, she always her so miserable. seemed to understand and sympathize in her feelings; even when she was in her worst moods, she was always ready to agree in Minna's oft repeated declaration—that "it was a very hard trial to be struck

down in one's youth by illness, and to have one's wings clipped just at the age when all is life and joy, when the desires are at the strongest, and the heart longs eagerly to see the realization of its own youthful dreams. Helen never felt the least disposed to pass judgment on the poor child. Her whole heart was filled with the tenderest sympathy for her. often longed for the dear Saviour to be once more on earth, to lay his hands on this young girl, and restore her, with a word, to health, and to all the joys natural to her age. For herself she would have asked nothing more of her Lord, had He been on earth, than that He would grant to her a continuance of all the heavenly blessings which she had found in the trial she had so humbly accepted. She would not have exchanged the hours of communion which it had procured for her with her heavenly Father, and her beloved Saviour, for all the happiness that had been taken from her. Earnestly did she pray to God every day to grant the same healing to Minna's afflicted soul, and to give her also grace to accept her trial joyfully, and find as much comfort as she had herself found. It would have been worse than useless, Helen thought, to talk to Minna now of the many duties that still lay in her path, or of the happiness that might be hers still in spite of her illness-and not only in spite of it, but in consequence of it. Such words would have been but cold gusts of wind to Minna's soul. She would have turned away from them, and drawn the cloak of reserve more tightly around her. Helen, quite spontaneously, and with tears in her eyes, spoke of all that Jesus had done for herself. She dwelt with a beaming countenance on the great love He had shown her in her sorrows and privations, on the peace she had found in walking with Him, and the special joys that He seemed, as it were, to hold in reserve for those who were in circumstances of peculiar sorrow or desolation. found herself listening with real interest, and, for a moment, the wish sprang up in her heart that she, too, belonged to Jesus, and could be comforted by Him. After Helen had left her, however, but little of her influence remained. Minna would then grow gloomy again, and be as irritable as ever—losing her temper about the merest trifle, and driving away once more all hope of the happiness which Helen had set before her, and which seemed to her too doubtful or too troublesome to be worth seeking after.

Sometimes, also, she took it into her head that comparisons were drawn between her and Helen, which were certainly not to her advantage. She even fancied that she had heard her father and Lucy hint at something of the kind; and at times, she really did not know whether to love or to hate the gentle girl whose presence, however, always brought into her room, for the time, a ray of peace and hope.

Helen's health continued very delicate, and the doctor insisted on her giving up, at all events during the warm weather, her lessons with the boys, who tired her out with their noise, even though they wished to be the best boys in the world. So that after four o'clock, Helen was now free from school-room duties, and used to come regularly to see Minna; and Minna looked forward to her visit, and found it an agreeable change in her monotonous day, even though her pride and reserve did not allow of her saying so. Since the hot weather had set in, Minna had been getting still paler and weaker than before; and her spirits, if possible, were lower than ever. At length, one day, when she was suffering dreadfully from depression, Miss Wilnore succeeded in persuading her that it would really be well to try whether it might not do her good to go out of doors for a short time. Many attempts to get her to do this had been made before; but Minna could not bear even to leave her room. Now, however, she yielded to Helen Wilmore's coaxing ways, and assurances that she would be wonderfully better for the effort, if she would only make it. The lawn was surrounded with trees, the finest of which was a cedar. It had been Mrs. Clavel's special pride; and under its wide-spreading branches she had arranged a rustic table and some benches.

When the shadows had begun to grow long, and the fierce heat of the day was over, Gertrude brought out a light couch, covered with pretty blue chints, and called John to come and help her carry their young mistress, and lay her upon it. The fresh air revived her at once; and she yielded to the sweet soothing influence of the soft summer breeze, the scert of the flowers, and the song of the birds. She could only remain out a very short time at first; but from that day, a great victory was gained, and a great step Minna now went out regulally whenmade. ever it was fine, and this summer it was almost always fine. Miss Wilmore generally arrived just in time to help to settle her comfortably on her couch, and arrange the little table beside her, vith books, work, fruits, and flowers. Lucy used to come and sit down beside Helen, working quietly at her needle, under her direction, unless she had gore for a walk with the boys. Later in the day, the whole family were to be found there; for no soonerhad the boys returned from their walk, than they came at once to the cedar tree to give a lively account of all they had

seen in their expeditions to the various picturesque places in the neighbourhood, where they were always discovering fresh points of interest. Sometimes the party was increased by a visit from the doctor's wife. She would come in with her fresh, good-tempered face, smiling as usual; and taking out her knitting, would join the group with a heart full of love for the children of the friend for whom she still wore mourning. She made a pleasant addition to the picture, with her smooth black dress, and her friendly face beaming underneath the high Alsatian cap, with its broad and snowy white streamers. Minna had never consented to receive a visit from her in her room; but now Madame Vincent's presence inspired her with a feeling of comfort, though she was too proud to acknowledge it. She was one of those homely, genial women, who fit in anywhere, bringing with them the warmth of their own benevolent hearts, and a simple and sincere motherliness which makes itself felt in everything they say or do.

Mr. Clavel always joined the little party under the cedar, before it broke up, after having faithfully and zealously performed the work of the day, which was often now too much for him. The good doctor and he often met in the house of sickness to which both had been summoned, and, on these occa-

sions, they generally walked back together to the Parsonage, and joined the others on the lawn, where all met as one family under the cedar tree. Sometimes Minna allowed herself to be amused by all that passed, and grew almost gay herself; at other times, her trial pressed heavily upon her, and she gave way to gloom. To be obliged to hear every one around her forming plans, or relating adventures; to see the young people return merrily home from a pleasant expedition, and, scarcely wearied by their exertions, to form fresh projects of pleasure; to hear all talking of the bright morrow, and to feel one's self shut out in what should have been the prime of life, from all life's joys, and chained to a bed of sickness-oh! it was hard! very, very hard!

When Gertrude came to fetch home the cow that grazed all day long in the green meadow, beyond the lawn, and when the heavy autumn vapours began to ascend in the valley below, threatening soon to reach them too, and announcing that the shades of evening would soon set in, the party broke up.

If Helen were not going to stay at the Parsonage to have supper, and spend the evening, the good doctor and his wife would see her safely home. Charlie and Lucy came into the house for their

usual play together, till bed-time, and Mr. Clavel generally spent the evening in Minna's room, often reading aloud for hours to her, for it was generally very late before she could get to sleep.

CHAPTER XII.

THE YOUNG TUTOR.

IT was generally believed at Tournèges and in the neighbourhood that Max Croner had left the country. Though he had no reason to fear the justice of the law, since no reliable witness could be brought up against him, still all agreed that he must feel that the brand of murder was stamped upon his forehead, and that he would never show his face again amongst them. The pastor had sent John and young Simon to the cottage in the Oak Grove, thinking that if Max had not taken his mother with him, the old woman must be left destitute, and without any means of providing for her own living. They found her outside her cottage, almost bent double, and trembling in every limb, trying to gather together a few sticks. She seemed frightened at the sight of them, and retreated at once to her home, whither they followed her. On the table stood a whole loaf of bread and a curd cheese. The old woman seemed to have lost her head, and walked up and down the room, trembling from head to foot, and uttering incoherent words. When they spoke to her, telling her they had come to help her, and asking what they could do for her, she replied: "I have never begged for anything. I want nothing; leave me in peace;" and sat down by the hearth, turning her back upon them.

So they left her thinking that provisions must be sent to her by the people of Burgwald. She had never consented to see the pastor of Tournèges since the day when he had refused to receive her son at the Holy Communion.

It was on a Sunday in September that Charlie Clavel and his tutor were walking together up the steep road that led to the Black Valley. Mr. Clavel had been sent for immediately after morning-service, to go and see a sick man, who lived a long way off, on the opposite side of the village; and Mr. Frénois, hearing him express his regret at not being able to go that afternoon to the Siberg's farm, as he had promised if possible to do, had offered to go instead.

Up to the time of their affliction, old Siberg and his wife had been regular in their attendance at the village church of Tournèges. They used to set off joyfully early on the Sunday morning to get over the long walk in good time, and enjoy a day spent in the Christian communion, which was especially prized by people living as they did in almost uninterrupted solitude throughout the week. They always spent the whole day at Tournèges in the house of one or another of their friends, and then others would go there to visit them, and shake hands with them, and learn and give all the tidings of the day. But since Frederic's death the old people had come no more to Tournèges, and Mr. Clavel and Mr. Vincent took it in turns to visit them every Sunday afternoon, whenever it was possible to do so. This afternoon, however, the services of both pastor and doctor were required in another quarter.

"Mr. Frénois," said Charlie, somewhat abruptly, as he and his tutor climbed the hill together, and had got about half-way, "I think you have changed your mind, and that you are going to be a clergyman."

Out of school-time, the boys were perfectly at home with their tutor, who was accustomed at such times to hold the most friendly and familiar conversation with them, though during lessons he maintained the strictest discipline, making them feel constantly the superiority of his position, as well as of his mind.

But in recreation time Arnold Frénois was as

much a boy as either of them in the interest with which he entered into their games, their expeditions, and their adventures. The boys too had reached an age when they also could sympathize with him, entering into many of his higher thoughts and feelings, his aspirations and ambitions, and especially his enthusiastic admiration and love of nature. Charlie especially, sobered and developed by a hidden sadness, often seemed quite a man in many of his Thus it was that "the three ways and words. inseparables," as they were often called, brought back from their expeditions the most varied and poetic impressions, and many so deep, that the remembrance of them never wore away, but enriched the whole of their future life.

On Charlie's putting this question so suddenly to him, Mr. Frénois stopped, and said, with a slight tone of reproach in his voice—

"You speak without thinking, Charlie; what is there in my coming to see these people to lead you to think that I must necessarily intend to be a pastor? Should not all those who have faith and love towards God in their hearts seek to bear witness for Him, whether called to the special work of the ministry or not? Does not Mr. Vincent minister well nigh as much to the spiritual wants of those whom he visits as he does to their bodily

sufferings? And is not Miss Wilmore always seeking to carry the consolations of the Gospel to all within her reach?"

"That's true," said Charlie, growing grave all of a sudden. "And oh, sir, if you had only known my mother. But that is not quite what I meant to say. I don't think, sir, when you first came to live here, you would have asked to help papa by visiting some of his poor people for him."

Mr. Frénois could not help smiling at the boy's honesty, but a very grave expression was on his face as he replied—

"No, Charlie, I should not; and if you are disposed to listen seriously, I don't mind telling you that I am a very different man now from what I was when I first came to Tournèges, elated with the success I had attained at college, proud of my past honours, burning with desire to obtain fresh ones, and eager to make my way brilliantly in the world."

The sun, which until now had been shedding its fiercest rays upon them as they ascended the hill, was at this spot hidden from them by a ledge of rocks, on which the goats and the sheep of the Black Valley were still enjoying a little pasture. A sheltered spot beneath offered a tempting halting place. Mr. Clavel often rested there in his frequent journeys to the Black Valley,

gathering quietly there the grace and strength nedeed for his visit to the poor Siberg family.

By tacit agreement, Mr. Frénois and Charlie sat down in this little natural grotto, and taking off their hats, allowed the fresh mountain air to play upon their heated foreheads. At a distance of a few feet in front of them rose the steep side of the precipice, and opposite to this were range after range of wooded mountains. A light veil of thin blue vapour softened the tints of this mountainous scenery which at times assumed a somewhat grave and gloomy character.

Both the elder and younger had countenances full of intelligence and beauty.

Arnold Frénois' face was the more regular and manly. Charlie's still retained much of its youthful grace and charm, but both had the same expression in them, full of soul and depth. The difference of age made the chief distinction between them. Charlie was just emerging into youth, and scarcely understood his own impulses, and the vague and ardent aspirations which he was beginning to feel. Arnold Frénois had long known them, he had tasted their nothingness, and their inability to fill and satisfy the soul; how he longed to devote himself to something more real, and consecrate the strength of his youth to some object worthy of it. He felt how

necessary it was, in order that this strength should be preserved, and not allowed to languish and die, that it should be used seriously and at once. Duty was the object which he had now before his eyes, solemn Christian duty, and God had pointed it out to him in the pure and lowly sphere of a life consecrated to His service. Charlie would soon comprehend his tutor's feelings and follow very closely in his steps. Even now, and ever since his mother's death, his giddiness had been all on the surface. Often after he had been, as Gertrude would call it, "rampaging about" with Richard Vincent, and playing all sorts of boyish tricks, he would come back into the little room which his mother had fitted up for him, and where every night she would come up and pray with him. There he would sit and think, and long to be what his mother had wished to see him, and what she had prayed God to make him.

"Charlie," said Mr. Frénois, "I have lived in a different atmosphere since I have been at Tournèges and it has made another man of me. Whilst you were preparing Greek and Latin exercises for me, I was meditating on my future. I felt the edifice that I had built for myself in imagination crumbling beneath my feet, and my dreams vanishing one by one. I no longer found any reality in any of them, and at length, Charlie, through God's mercy I was led to

the foot of the cross, and all my life seemed to change and to offer a prospect, humble and obscure certainly, but full of peace and holiness.

"My mother still lives," he continued, laying his hand on Charlie's shoulder, with a look of affection, "but she is all that I have left to me. If you only knew what sacrifices she has made for my sake ever since my poor father's death! We used to live in Alsace in a pretty country house, near our own manufactory. My father was unfortunate in business. · The whole of our property was lost in a commercial crisis, and-I do not mind telling you, Charliehis reason gave way, he sank into a state of despair and melancholy, and his end was a sad one. My mother seemed only to live on for my sake, she was a heroine of fortitude and patience, and even when quite a little boy, I had a perfect veneration for her, and could not bear to give her any trouble or sorrow. My love for her saved me from many temptations. We lived together in two small rooms at the very top of an old house in Strasbourg. My mother taught me all day long, and gave all her time and strength to my lessons; I saw what efforts she was making for my education, and resolved to get on in my studies and reward her. When I grew older I perceived how great her fatigue often was, and what difficulty she had in maintaining us both and in trying to provide

for my future. To be the support of her declining years, to work in my turn for her, to see her enjoying comfort and rest one day,—this became the golden dream of my life."

"And you have studied so hard!" said Charlie, warmly. "Your mother must be happy now."

"I am afraid she still works hard," said Arnold, sadly; "and now that I am away from her, she no longer has our old pleasant talks and little interchanges of mutual affection to cheer her. to see her in a different home. But what am I thinking about?" he added; "I believe the sun is going down, and it is growing dark, whilst we are forgetting the time here."

They rose and began to walk on rapidly and silently. Charlie did not like to ask his tutor to tell him more of his story, though he had not heard half of it. He watched a thin blue smoke rising above the trees, in the Oak-grove mountain, and knew that it came from Max Croner's cottage. At that moment they turned the corner of the road, and came in sight of the old ruins of the Black Valley. It was some time since Charlie had seen them, and he almost shuddered as they rose up, dark and threatening, before his eyes; the deep shadows of the mountain opposite falling gloomily upon them, as the sun went down rapidly.

Little Lisette, sitting alone on the threshold of the door, with her cat upon her lap, alone prevented the farm from having an entirely deserted appearance. Her mother, she said, was with her grandparents in the large bedroom—the room where Frederic had died; it was one of their comforts to meet together every Sabbath in this room, to talk of him who was gone. They loved to recall his affection and his goodness, and to encourage one another in bearing patiently the trial of separation, in struggling on without him, and in anticipating a happy and eternal re-union. The large Bible lay on the table in readiness for the visit of Christian comfort to which all looked forward.

The two young men went in, and after the greetings were over, Arnold went to the table and opened the holy book with some timidity and emotion. After having read aloud, in an earnest voice, the beautiful chapter in which St. Paul writes to the saints of Corinth, concerning the resurrection of the dead, his own recent experiences overflowed, and the true faith and deep love which had been burning within him for weeks, were poured forth in eloquent and heart-stirring words. He spoke to the afflicted souls before him of the life to come, with all the fervour of a heart lately won to Christ, and which had resolved, henceforth, to live only to Him. All present felt

that the heavenly experiences, the blessed pardon and divine love, which he set before them, were worth more than all the best treasures of this world. The youthful sympathy, which, when crowned with faith, possesses a power entirely its own, and is well nigh irresistible, completely won the hearts of the Siberg family, and with tears and thanks, they begged that he would come and see them again soon.

"The weeks often seem long when no one comes up to see us," said old Peter. "You must take your walks in this direction, sir, when you have time to come so far."

"Mr. Frénois has not much time, I can tell you," said Charlie. "I should like you to know how hard he works. I believe he would never go out at all if it were not for our sakes."

A little boiled milk and home-made brown bread were offered and accepted, and the tutor and pupil were just about to take leave, when Leonore, who had slipped quietly out of the room after the exposition and prayer, came in again quietly. Going up to Arnold, she placed in his hands, with eyes full of tears, but without speaking a word, a lock of her husband's hair, folded in a piece of white paper.

Arnold Frénois placed it in his pocket, and shook hands with the sorrow-stricken young widow. He

felt that his sympathy had been appreciated, and that his desire to comfort had been granted.

"Mr. Frénois," said Charlie, as they left the farm, "if we had time to climb up to the Castle, we might come home through the Oak-grove."

"I am afraid we should be completely benighted," said Mr. Frénois, hesitating; for the proposal tempted him also. "I am afraid they would be getting uneasy at Tournèges."

"They are never uneasy when I am with you," said Charlie, who had been maturing this plan in his mind; "besides, it really is not very much out of the way; one avoids that tiresome high road, for our village lies just at the foot of the hill that we shall descend. There is no climbing except just up to the ruins. And I do so want to see the place where they found poor Frederic. We have never been up there since."

Arnold Frénois was not without his own share of curiosity on this subject. The tragic and dramatic had a charm for him as for all young people, and Charlie said no more, for he saw that Mr. Frénois was already on his way to ascend the rocks, which rose high above the old farm buildings.

They soon reached the summit, crushing under their feet the short dry grass which was thickly

strewn with stones and rocks. The old tower rose with threatening aspect above them; they could hear within the cry of the eagles, and the hoarse cawing of the rooks, who were bestirring themselves in readiness for their night's round. Arnold Frénois and Charlie stooped down and entered, scratching themselves well with the brambles which stopped up the narrow opening. When they were inside the gloomy enclosure, all was silence, such a solemn silence, that they dared not break it by a word, almost dreading the sound of an answering echo in the distance. But the same thought occurred to both their minds, as they raised their eyes from the midst of this depth of gloom, and fixed them on the clear blue sky above, where one bright star was already shining with a pure and steady light. They both thought of Frederic, of the resurrection glory now shining for him; and Arnold thought, also, of the pardon and hope that there was yet with God, for the poor soul that had sunk to the deepest abyss of sin. At this moment, Arnold seized Charlie's hand, and drew him quickly outside the ruins.

"I don't believe we are safe here," he exclaimed. "How imprudent it was to allow you to come so close underneath these old ruins. Really, I am not fit to take charge of you, if I can run such risks as this."

"Mr. Frénois," said Charlie, when they were well out of all danger, "it's a good thing for me that you are not a grave old tutor. I should not like you half as much if you were; but as it is, I love you with all my heart, and I wish—yes, I wish from the bottom of my soul—that I could be like you, that I do!"

The boy's heart had been overflowing ever since they had left the farm. He put his arm now lovingly within his tutor's, and Mr. Frénois took his hand and grasped it warmly, whilst the brilliant rays of the setting sun shone gloriously upon them, as if resting upon their friendship, with an assent of warmth and blessing.

They stood, for a few moments, gazing in an ecstasy of admiration on the beautiful country around them, which, at this moment, reflected every varied tint of light, and shade, and colour. Nothing could be seen of Tournèges but the church spire, whose Gothic carvings seemed as though painted upon a background of the loveliest rose-colour, rising above the mountain of the Oak-groves, just where it began to descend towards the plain.

It was with reluctance that they left this scene of beauty, just as the light was dying away from it, and it seemed preparing for the night's repose. They cast a last sorrowful look at the spot where Frederic Siberg had fallen. He also had sunk to rest like the bright and joyful day; whilst Max Croner, as the noise of each day ceased, must surely hear within his soul the fearful upbraidings of a guilty conscience, and seek in vain for any hiding-place from his anguish and remorse.

They came down the mountain side rapidly, springing from point to point with the skill of accustomed mountaineers, until they reached the bottom of the steep path filled with loose stones, which joins the "Chênaies." Here they came upon a pretty clearly defined path, which winds up the opposite site of the hill, as far as the crest of the "Chênaies." At the end of this they expected to find another path cut, which would lead them directly into Tournèges, by the other side of the mountain.

Feeling confident that they would soon be at home now, they began to chat together, whilst the darkness was increasing, under the great trees.

"Suppose we were to meet Max Croner," Charlie said all at once, suddenly drawing nearer to his companion. "We don't know for certain that he has gone out of the country, and is not hiding somewhere. If we were to meet him, Mr. Frénois, would you have the courage to speak to him?"

"I think God would give it to me, Charlie," he replied. "I should like to go to those who are lost,

and try to bring them back, by telling them, in the name of Jesus, that there is forgiveness with God for all who repent. It is only a short time since I have myself known and understood the Gospel message, with all that it brings to our souls, and all that it requires of them in return. I came here full of the earthly hopes which had led me to work incessantly, determined to make my mother proud and happy by the brilliancy of my career; but not thinking that God required something else of me. At that time, I rarely opened the Bible; I said prayers merely for form's sake, and my heart was entirely fascinated by the beauty and poetry of a religion entirely human and natural. I worshipped God in nature, I loved Him vaguely because he had given me my mother; but I did not understand to what depth of love He had loved me, or the need that I had of Him and of his only Son our Redeemer. Now that my heart has been opened to see this, it can realize that everything, without God, is worth nothing. Now I desire to give myself up entirely to Him."

"How happy it must make your mother to hear all this," said Charlie, thinking of his own mother.

Arnold sighed, but did not reply. He left the boy to enjoy the happy belief that every mother, like his own, devoted her son to God.

"To tell you the truth, Charlie," he said at

length, "if I were free, I would from henceforth give not only my soul to God, but my whole life. Though I know that a man may serve God faithfully in any vocation, and even in a calling which seems to be but ill adapted for doing so, still I know that this is difficult, that there are many quicksands in such a path, and that one runs a great risk of being carried away by the world and its vanities. I long to be somewhere where I shall not be tempted to deny my God, where I can serve Him entirely. Can I ever do enough for Him who has saved me by His blood, and has restored me to Himself and to heaven? and will He not make use of me, even of me, weak and feeble as I am, to speak of His mercy to those who are lost, as I was once lost?"

"My father's life is a beautiful life, certainly," said Charlie, thoughtfully, "though it is one but little known to the world. I had mapped out a very different one for myself, however—far away from this poor little village."

"Do you not think," asked Arnold, "that a life hidden to this world, but which gives joy to the angels of heaven by continually leading new sinners to repentance, is the happiest, the most honourable of all lives."

"And has all this change come upon you since you have been here?" said Charlie, with yet more interest.

"It seems wonderful to you," said Mr. Frénois, "because you have been accustomed from your infancy to be with religious people. But I came amongst you fresh from a world where God was never mentioned, where all lived and toiled for this life only; and I can never tell you what an impression was made upon me by the holy beauty of so many humble lives, all devoted to one heavenly object which was altogether new to me. I saw your father at his work, and I realized for the first time the immense value of but one of the immortal souls which he was striving to bring to repentance and faith. This life of holy labour in a hidden sphere, is in reality far more beautiful and glorious than all the lives that men are ready to sacrifice for human honour and applause. Now I am enlightened, and now I am happy,—at least," he added, as if correcting himself, "I should be perfectly so, if only my dear mother understood me."

Within the few last moments they had, without knowing it, turned out of the path which they had at first been following, or else it had been lost amongst the many paths which crossed and recrossed each other in this little frequented part of the forest. It had become very dark for them, too, any longer to trace its course. The moon would not rise until late that evening, and they had no means of finding out

whether they were in the right road, whilst almost at every step they came across the trunk of a tree, or a bramble, or some other obstruction, which obliged them to turn yet more out of their way. At length they stopped, for they perceived that they had got, without noticing it, quite to the left side of the mountain, in seeking to avoid the difficulties on the other side.

"I believe we are wandering further and further from Tournèges," said Mr. Frénois, with evident anxiety. "Charlie, you have been brought up in this place. I counted on your knowing your road better."

"I have scarcely ever been as far as this," the boy replied; "indeed, I believe I have never been here before; this part of the country is quite out of our parish."

"Are we not near Burgwald?" Mr. Frénois asked.

"Oh, no," replied Charlie. "Burgwald is on the same side as the Black Valley. I believe it is somewhere about here that the Croners' cottage is."

He was not mistaken in his supposition, for, after having walked a few paces further, they came upon a low wall, which surrounded a small enclosure, at the further end of which they saw the glimmering of a light, evidently from some window.

"Oh, do let us go away from here," said Charlie,

lowering his voice almost to a whisper. "I know that's his cottage. I would not go in there, no, not for anything; I would rather die of cold out here in the forest."

"Charlie!" exclaimed his tutor, "I'm ashamed of you. Why, what are you afraid of? his poor old mother? Do you think she would be wicked enough to refuse to tell us the way back to Tournèges; for, of course, there must be a pathway cut from here down to the village."

Charlie was himself again by this time. The momentary feeling of dread had quite passed away.

It had not been exactly a sensation of fear that he had experienced; but rather of moral repulsion from even drawing near to anything that had belonged to the murderer of his fellow man. But now Charlie's courage returned, and he remembered, too, that he was the son of a minister of the gospel of mercy—mercy proclaimed to the vilest and most criminal.

They climbed over the wall, and Arnold Frénois, stepping forward, knocked boldly at the window, through which the light was shining. No one answered; but they could hear the sound of talking inside, and could distinguish that one voice was that of a man. Charlie no longer wished to retreat, courage had gained the day; and even if the voice belonged to Max himself, he did not shrink from the

meeting. At that moment, which was the most solemn the boy had ever known, his soul went up to God in a secret prayer for protection.

They waited a few moments, and then heard footsteps approaching the door, and an old woman's voice inquired: "Who was there? and what they wanted?"

"We have lost our way," replied Arnold, "and shall be grateful to you if you will tell us how to get to Tournèges."

There was no answer; but they could hear a murmuring as of whispered consultation within the cottage.

"Tell me your names," at length was the reply, in a man's voice; "only on this condition will I give you any information whatever."

Mr. Frénois hesitated, but Charlie called out instantly, "Charles Clavel, and his tutor, Mr. Frénois." The man's voice answered, in a trembling tone, "Wait."

An instant afterwards, the light inside was extinguished, the door of the house was opened, and a man appeared, and told them in a rough voice, to follow him.

All that Charlie and Arnold could see of him, in the dark, was, that he was short, and wore a broadbrimmed hat. He walked some steps in advance, making a pathway for them as he went.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHATTING.

THERE was quite a little party that evening at the Parsonage. Miss Wilmore had stayed to tea, and the doctor and his wife, with Richard, had arrived soon after. They formed an animated circle round the table in the drawing-room, on which stood the large lamp which that evening shone upon a group of faces radiant with more than usual happiness and thankfulness. And the cause of all this content and grateful joy was, that in the midst of this group Minna had taken her place for the first time for many a long month, and was now smiling on all around, and responding gratefully and graciously to the effort that all were making to render this first evening of her return to the family circle a happy one.

The fresh air which she had been breathing out in the garden almost all day had quite set her up; it had been such a lovely day, while the heat had been so pleasantly tempered with a delicious breeze. When the time came for her to return to the house, Helen Wilmore ventured to propose, that instead of going back to her room at once, she should be carried into the drawing-room, which was on the ground floor. Minna had consented at once, and seemed to enjoy the idea; and Lucy, who always considered the family gathering in the evening much the happiest time of the day, was overjoyed at the thought of Minna's being with them. She ran up to kiss her sister, opened the windows to let in as much fresh air and sunshine as possible, and arranged the cushions on the couch which had been wheeled for the occasion close to the table. She then ran off to the kitchen to tell the good news to Gertrude, and back into the garden, returning to the drawing-room with a whole armful of flowers, with which she commenced making nosegays in honour of the occasion.

Ah! it was easy for Minna to see how little it took to restore happiness to the desolate house, and how much it lay with her to depress or to cheer those around her.

After they were all settled in the drawing-room, a hymn was sung, Lucy playing the accompaniment somewhat indifferently.

"You have forgotten your music of late, Lucy," she said; "now that I am better I think I might

help you to practise sometimes of an evening as Miss Wilmore is not musical."

This gave rise to another embrace from Lucy, who had been greatly distressed for a long time at not being able to open the piano for fear of disturbing her sister. Indeed it was not so very long ago since Charlie and she had been enjoying an attempt to get up one of the old duets they had learned with their mother, and had had their pleasure suddenly stopped by receiving a message from Minna to the effect that "they were setting all her nerves on edge, and she wished they would stop that horrible noise."

Later in the evening Helen proposed reading aloud, chiefly in the hope of cheering Richard Vincent, who had been rather sulky all the afternoon in consequence of not having been asked to go with Mr. Frénois and Charlie. She chose a book that she thought would suit Richard's taste, the memoirs of a missionary who had undergone many dangerous adventures and performed many acts of heroism in carrying the Gospel into savage lands. They had just reached the most interesting part of the narrative when the door opened, and Gertrude appeared with the baby in her arms.

"How long am I to keep supper waiting for the young gentlemen?" she asked; "they don't seem to be coming."

Every one looked at the clock. It was just going to strike half past eight.

"Is there anything to be uneasy about, Mr. Clavel?" asked Mrs. Vincent, holding out her arms to little Marie, who knew her well, and was very glad to come to the lamp, and tap upon the table, and lay hold of everything she could reach. She had grown quite strong and merry again after her attack of teething was over.

The pastor was sitting beside his elder daughter, having returned very tired after his last service, and was enjoying the quiet of the evening's rest, and especially the pleasure of seeing Minna so well and happy. It was balm to his heart to hear her laughing quite merrily. She was evidently really better in health, and how greatly subdued in spirit!

"The Sibergs no doubt have made them stay to supper," replied Mr. Clavel, "they always press one to do so. I expect they could not get away."

"I can understand their finding it rather difficult," said the doctor, "the delicious coffee and new-made butter at the valley farm have great attractions for older folk than they, especially when a good walk in the mountain air has freshened their appetite."

As Charlie had said, all felt he was under good care with Mr. Frénois. Still it certainly began to get very late.

"If there were only a moon to-night," said Gertrude, "it would be different, but a wrong turn may easily be taken in the valley road on such an evening as this."

And she went off evidently very anxious, leaving the baby to the care of her kind godmother, who allowed her to go on rummaging her pocket and biting her leather spectacle-case.

"What could we do?" asked Mrs. Vincent.

"They are not children," replied Mr. Clavel, "and I can't say I feel uneasy. The road is not so bad as Gertrude makes out, and there is really no danger for foot-passengers."

"One can walk three abreast in the pathway," said the doctor; "I don't approve of not letting young people out of one's sight, they must learn to take care of themselves some time or other. If they are not here within the next hour, I will go and look after them."

"And take me with you, papa," exclaimed Richard.

"But they are sure to be home before that, papa, are they not?" asked Lucy, looking very white, and evidently making an effort to keep back her tears; "for if they are not——"

"Well, and what if they are not?" asked the doctor.

"Then, they will be at the bottom of the precipice," cried Richard, looking maliciously at Lucy; "or, perhaps, eaten up by the wolves."

"Indeed," said the doctor, "wolves come nearer to us than you perhaps imagine, Richard; and I confess that I, for one, at all events in the winter, in the time of the snow and frost, would not at all like to know that any young people belonging to me were wandering about in the mountains. But, hush! I believe here come our young deserters."

Pyrrhus was indeed barking with all his might, and at this moment the bell at the gate was rung sharply.

In another instant Gertrude came in from the kitchen at the same moment that Charlie entered the room, but without Arnold.

Everybody, except Minna, rose from their seats, and all asked at one and the same moment, the same questions, in the same tone of apprehension.

"Where is Mr. Frénois? What has happened?" Charlie was deadly pale and quite out of breath.

"You must send and fetch him home at once," he replied, "it's nothing very serious; pray don't tremble so, Minna; only he has fallen down, and hurt his arm rather badly. He fainted dead away, and I had to leave him and come for help."

"Fainted dead away, alone in the mountain!"

exclaimed good Mrs. Vincent, thinking at once of Arnold's widowed mother, and inclined to set off immediately to the help of the only son who seemed to have been intrusted to her motherly care.

"He is not alone," said Charlie. He hesitated an instant, and then added in a lower tone, "I left him with Max Croner, who promised me not to leave him until he heard us coming."

At this name, which few liked to utter in the neighbourhood, a shudder ran through the whole party. The pastor alone felt a strange and unaccourtable feeling of hope thrill through his heart. He took Charlie by the hand and led him to the table where Gertrude was already preparing something warm for him to take.

"Eat and drink, my boy," he said, "and then we will be off, for we want you to show us the way. You need not be in the least afraid," he added, turning to the anxious faces round him, "Max Crone is not an assassin,—Cain killed Abel because he thought that God had accepted Abel's service, and turned His face from him."

"It was Max who was showing us the way," said Charlie, as he swallowed the almost boiling tea which Gertrude poured out for him, "we were not in the hast afraid of him. Mr. Frénois wanted so much to talk to him, only he would keep a little way

in front. If he has recovered consciousness, I am sure he will talk to him, and Max's heart will be touched."

A few moments later, and Mr. Clavel, the doctor, John the man-servant, and the two boys, by the dim light of a lantern, were climbing the mountan at the back of the Parsonage, opposite Minra's window.

Minna declared she could not go to bed until the party returned, and they all sat up together in the drawing-room. Minna was very flushed and feverish, but Helen Wilmore read some of the most beautiful of the psalms in a low soothing tone, while she persuaded them to sing some of their hymns, and this helped to pass the long, weary hours. They were very uneasy about Arnold Frénois, yet the same thought found its way into more than one a their minds, that this might be a time of mercy for poor Max Croner, providentially prepared by Him towhom many amongst them had been praying.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MURDERER.

It was long before Arnold recovered from his fainting fit, but at length the fresh mountain air gained the victory, and he revived to find himself stretched under a great tree, with his head resting on a mossy stone.

He tried to raise himself, but the pain was so sharp when he did so, that he fell back again with a groan.

"You need not be afraid of me," said the man who was watching beside him, in a voice evidently trembling with emotion, "your friends will soon be here, and will take you safely from me."

"I am not at all afraid of you," replied Arnold, awaking to the recollection of all that had happened, "there is no need to speak to me in this way; I am very grateful to you. Far from being afraid of you, I thank God who led me to you in this strange way. I have long desired to see you."

"I daresay you have," replied Max in a bitter tone, "every one wants to see me, no doubt! I can just fancy how all those good people down below have been talking about me. Wouldn't they like to see me hanging on a gibbet! that's the sight, I fancy, that they'd enjoy most. They don't get the chance every day, you know, of seeing such a monster as I am, and it would be something to talk about for the rest of their lives."

"Hush!" said Arnold, "you are quite mistaken, I assure you. There has been great trouble, great consternation, of course, in the village. And just at first, there was a great deal of talk about vengeance, but not now, not now, thank God. At present the general feeling, I sincerely believe, is one of pity and sorrow for the unhappy criminal; vengeance and chastisement are left to God and his own conscience."

"You speak of some few perhaps," said Max, "the others are cowards, who would be afraid to come and look for me here in the mountain! Besides," he added, speaking now in a tone of defiance, "who knows that I am here? who has seen me?"

"Who has seen you, Max!" said the young man, in a tone of searching inquiry, as by an effort he raised his hand to the heaven above, towards which his white face was turned, "who has seen you! You know well who has seen you! God has, the Almighty and All-seeing God; and it is this that makes me tremble for you."

Max made no reply, and Arnold continued, "Yes, God saw all, knows all. Yet is there pardon with Him—pardon for the guiltiest—if only they repent of their sin. None need despair, none need harden their hearts against Him. Oh, Max, repent, repent—you must be miserable, yes, miserable."

"I am, God knows I am," broke from the lips of the wretched man, almost involuntarily.

"Tell me all about it," said Arnold, feebly, but with a depth of the tenderest compassion in his tone; "I can feel it all, sympathize in every word. I too am a vile, guilty sinner, I too deserved the wrath of God."

"I will open my heart to you," cried Max, "I see you are different from others. You understand that I suffer, you see that I am not altogether hardened. Ah!" he added, "they may hate me, they may curse me, but they cannot hate or curse me more than I hate and curse myself! I should like to bury myself in the darkest recesses of the earth—I should like to shut myself out from the light of heaven for ever. Yes! if it had not been for my poor old mother, I should long ago have hurled my miserable self from the top of the very tower under which he fell, and be lying there a prey to

the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air.

Then they would have been revenged, and I But here they come!"

Max hastily placed some dry leaves under Arnold's head, gently loosened the arm that was supporting him under his shoulders, and would have made his escape, but Arnold held him by the arm.

"Stop," he said, "one moment more. You must not go until I have told you that they have forgiven you. Yes, these poor Sibergs have completely forgiven you. All they desire now is that God may forgive you too, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who gave his life for you, and for them also; all they pray now is that one day they may see the paradise above open to receive you, as once it opened to receive the malefactor, who at his last hour, hanging on a cross of earthly punishment, sought and found heavenly pardon."

Max Croner fell upon his knees beside his companion.

"Forgiven me?" he cried, "the Sibergs have forgiven me? Then may there be forgiveness with God also! Oh, my God, my God, grant me Thy pardon also. Have pity on the torture I have endured ever since that awful day! Have pity on all the sufferings of my whole life, for all my life have I been a hateful, hating, envious, revengeful murderer."

And the strong man's frame shook with his emotion, and his sobs burst forth.

The footsteps he heard were merely in his own excited fancy; all was silence once more, and as soon as Max could sufficiently control his voice, he continued—

"I make no excuse for myself," he said; "I have no wish to charge the memory of my poor father with the guilt of my sin. You say, perhaps, that I knew the commandments of God, and that this aggravates my guilt—and this is true. But, ah! you do not know what it is to be incited to jealousy from your very cradle, to have words of envy, hatred, complaining, for ever sounding in your ears. I have been made to see in the property of others a constant source of coveting, and to hear the happy and the fortunate continually abused and pointed out as one's natural enemies. Do you know, I often felt inclined to like Frederic, he was so good, so unsuspicious, so kind-hearted, he would have given me anything he possessed. I often felt disposed, when at school, to make a friend of him, but when I returned home, and heard my parents abusing the family, and contrasting their fate with ours, as we sat down to our hot-water soup and dry bread, then the prosperity of the Sibergs stuck in my throat also, and I too felt that I owed them a grudge for being so much better off than we were. My father used to talk of that conceited little Frederic, who lorded it over me, and said we were worth more than any of them."

"Oh, do not make excuses," exclaimed Arnold; "think of all Mr. Clavel has so often told you; how earnestly he used to entreat you to struggle against this dreadful envy, and warn you of what the consequences would be if you persisted in indulging such a dangerous spirit."

"Yes, yes, I know," said Max, "Mr. Clavel always spoke kindly to me, and he is no coward. I believe he would have come to look for me, if he had not supposed that I had left the country. I believe he would have treated me kindly even now—but this time here they really are." And he rose to his feet with a shudder.

"No, no," said Arnold, "it is only a bird moving in the trees, sit down again."

Max sat down. "You see what a life I lead, in constant torment of mind, frightened at the slightest sound, like a beast hunted to its lair. Every crevice, every hole in the mountain, knows me, and I am safe nowhere. Ah! if it had not been for my poor old mother. Tell me what that child said about it."

"She said that a wicked man had killed her poor father."

Max buried his face in his hands.

"Why do you not drive me from you?" he cried, "wretch that I am! But I will tell you all; you shall hear the miserable story to the end, and know what it was that exasperated me so cruelly, that drove me mad-for I was mad that day. It was his having taken Leonore from me. I had loved her all my life, ever since I was fourteen, and even then I used to feel that if he stole her heart away from me I could kill him. He was worthy of her, and she loved him, whilst I could see that she was afraid of me, and kept out of my way. I felt that it was my fate to be despised by all, and deprived of everything. I left the country, in the vain hope that perhaps after I was gone she might feel some regret for me. I said to myself, that her friendship with Frederic was only that of two children, who had been brought up together like brother and sister. I came back to find that she was lost to me for ever. They were married, and the sight of their happiness drove me mad. It was only after the deed was committed that I felt what I had done, and that I was a lost man."

"And you killed him?" murmured Arnold, faintly, scarcely knowing what he said.

"I killed him," replied Max, bitterly, "and now I would gladly give up my own life to bring him back and restore him to her—yes, to Leonore, and to their poor little child, whom I saw myself wiping

away the blood that flowed from his temple with her innocent little hands. I had come that way by chance, feeling a desire to get a look at Leonore once more before I left the country again for ever. when I saw him walking below, and saw too that he did not observe me, as he chatted with the child, who was running on in front every now and then to gather wild-flowers for him. At length he came to the foot of the tower directly underneath the place where I was standing, the child was at some distance, and the Devil told me that stones were perpetually falling from these old walls, that there would be nothing wonderful in one of these stones falling now, and that the moment had come to indulge my hatred. Oh, when I saw him stagger under the blow and And now at night I watch Leonore stealing sorrowfully to the cemetery; I know that she is miserable for ever, that there is no one more wretched save myself! She dreads my approach even now, I believe, when she thinks I am far away. see her shudder, and draw her child closer to her, as though she could feel me near. God knows, I would not hurt that poor child, no, not if she were standing before me, proclaiming that I was the man! me again what you said before. Were those words true? Are they possible? Have they forgiven me?" Then God cannot be less merciful than man.

Convince me that these words are true, and I am ready to be led to trial, and die for my crime, only I would wait just a very little longer, until my poor old mother were gone."

The moon had risen higher, and Arnold saw that the face of the strong man, which was turned towards him in fearful anguish, was wet with tears.

Leaning on the arm which had not been injured, he sat up, and said,

"Max, I do not only pity you, but I love you; yes, my very heart goes out towards you, for love of the God whose compassions are infinite. You will let me seek you out in your hiding-place in the forest, and speak to you of Him who has died for your sins upon the cross, and who can change your remorse into repentance, and your despair into hope. Will you not listen to the message I give you from my Saviour, who desires also to be your Saviour. 'This day thou mayest be with Me in paradise.' There is pardon for every sinner, yes, even for him whose sins are blackest, if only he smites upon his breast in broken-hearted contrition, and cries: 'God, be merciful to me a sinner.'"

"Oh, my God—my God!" continued he, vainly attempting to clasp his hands together, in the fervour of his emotion. "Have mercy on this miserable soul, forgive this unhappy man!"

Max sprang to his feet, and kneeling down beside Arnold, threw his arms around him, and pressed him to his heart. At that moment, steps were really heard in the distance; they drew nearer rapidly, and, with a bound, Max had disappeared into the thickest depth of the dark trees around.

Charles Clavel had not proved a good guide, and the party had taken many turns and counter-turns before they at last, and unexpectedly, came upon the spot where Arnold had been left. He was surrounded now with many kind friends, all equally anxious about him. He could, however, scarcely answer the questions they put to him. All the fatigue and emotion he had suffered, during this painful scene with Max, had completely exhausted his strength. They carried him home on a litter which had been hastily improvised, and he never spoke once during the difficult and painful journey; merely thanking them with a smile, as from time to time they halted to give him the stimulants necessary to keep up his strength. At daybreak, they reached the little green gate, which opened into the garden of the doctor's house. Charlie came forward to get a sight of his friend's face, and he saw that, pale and ill as it looked, it was lighted up by an expression of intense happiness.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SISTERS.

Arnold's arm had been broken at the shoulder. Our country doctors, happily, are not bad surgeons; and in these mountain villages, their skill is kept in pretty constant practice by the accidents, and falls, and bruises, that are continually occurring. Clavel himself had often been obliged to render assistance to his friend the doctor, in performing rather serious operations; and it was he who now held Mr. Frénois in his arms, whilst the doctor attended to his arm-a painful business. Vincent, whom emotion seemed only to render more self-possessed and active than ever, arranged the sick-room to perfection, and Richard was installed as head-nurse, with strict orders to keep the most perfect stillness. The terrible pain was over, and Arnold, wearied out with all that he had gone through, gladly gave himself up to the stupor that overpowered him. He lay motionless in the quiet room, with its white window-curtains, tinged now with a delicate

rose-colour, by the rays of the sun that was beginning to shine behind the great trees which sheltered the house, amidst the branches of which the joyous little birds were already beginning their morning concert. Arnold felt thankful when he heard the doctor peremptorily command silence and sleep. The latter, he felt to be impossible, but the former was most acceptable, for his mind was full of happy thoughts which carried him quite out of this world. This night of pain, this night of apostolic work, of burning love for souls, appeared to him more glorious than any day he had ever yet spent. He had scarcely entered into his Master's service, before that gracious Master had seen fit to allow him to preach his gospel of pardon to a poor soul who thought himself lost for ever; but who might, even now, be repenting of his sin, and believing in the boundless mercy of God, which had been proclaimed to him.

Richard took a Latin book and seated himself quietly at the window. In his love for his tutor, he tried to learn some rules of grammar by such light as he could get through the closed curtain, but when Charlie came to take his place as sick nurse, punctual to the moment, he found that weariness had overpowered his friend. The boy was little accustomed to such nights of fatigue, and he had fallen fast asleep over his book with his head on the table

before him. The two boys had disputed the privilege of first watching in the room, and in order to content them, they had been allowed to take turns in doing so. The post was a perfectly honorary one, for Mrs. Vincent was herself keeping strict watch the whole time, looking in noiselessly at the door. Whenever she saw that Arnold's eves were open, she went quietly up to him to re-arrange his pillow or put the cup of fresh water to his Arnold felt that it was almost as though his mother herself had been there—his poor mother. He did not wish her to be written to, as she would be so dreadfully alarmed and there was no need for it; there was no danger, and he was being well taken care of. He said this to Mrs. Vincent, and the good woman's eyes were full of tears as she bent over the bed and, parting his thick locks of hair, kissed him on his forehead.

"We will write to her," she said, "when the fever is gone, and you are better, and when you begin to get up, we will ask her to come and stay with us. The doctor has been talking to me about it for some time, and we meant to propose it to you. I feel sure our mountain air would do her good, but she must not have the shock of seeing you as you are now, my poor boy. It's quite bad enough for me who am not your mother."

And she went to the window to arrange the curtains, and do something to her own eyes at the same time.

"Stay," she said, "here are the children from the Parsonage coming already to inquire about you. The nurse has a basket of some kind on her arm, and looks as if she was walking on eggs—old Gertrude has been preparing something nice for you, I'm sure. And Lucy is laden with flowers, dear little thing; it is all she has to bring, and I am sure I don't know what would become of her, if she had not flowers to carry everywhere about with her."

Arnold gave himself up to be nursed and petted. Only to God could he express the gratitude he felt for all the love and attention that were heaped upon him day after day, and especially for the invitation that had been sent to his mother, whom he knew to be wearied out with a long fatiguing summer.

Fresh flowers from Lucy kept his room gay, while Charlie and Richard continued to take it by turns to keep him company in the day, and his elder friends took it turn by turn to sit up with him at night. No one spoke to him of Max, but his thoughts were constantly with him, and he took advantage of the first day of returning strength to confide to Mr. Clavel all that had passed between them on the night of the accident.

"I will go and see him this very evening," said Mr. Clavel.

That night Arnold was worse. Fever had set in again, and either the doctor or his wife watched constantly beside him, to soothe him and keep him quiet, lest in his delirium he should injure his poor arm.

Towards evening, a little boy from the village, who constantly wandered to the mountain for amusement, came up to the Parsonage. He brought a slip of paper on which was written a message for the pastor—

"Widow Croner is dangerously ill, she wishes to see you before she dies."

Mr. Clavel was in the garden with Miss Wilmore and the two girls.

"I will go at once," he said, "but the doctor must come with me."

"I am afraid that is impossible," said Minna, with great interest. "Charlie has just come from Mr. Vincent's, and he says that Mr. Frénois is very ill this afternoon, he is quite delirious again."

"Then I suppose I must go alone," said Mr. Clavel; "happily, I myself know something of doctoring, thanks to my having gone about so much with Mr. Vincent; but I shall want to take a good many things with me. I am pretty sure to find nothing there."

"You did not ask Sebastian who gave him the note?" said Lucy.

"I know the handwriting. You can pray for me while I am gone, children," he added. "I believe there is work prepared for me in that cottage—work already well begun by dear Mr. Frénois. The way has been opened to that poor unhappy man's soul, and yet, I confess, I feel a sort of shrinking at the thought of seeing him myself."

Helen Wilmore followed him to the door of the room.

"Let me go with you," she said; "the poor sick woman will need some one to nurse her. Oh, do not say no," she added, earnestly. "I am so strong now—so perfectly able to do it, and I feel called to go to this dying creature. You will have enough to do with him, and I can take care of her."

Then seeing that Mr. Clavel still hesitated, she said, her cheek flushing crimson as she did so—

"I hope you will not be angry; I am sure you will not, indeed; but I know the poor woman well. I have been there five or six times already."

Mr. Clavel and the girls uttered, simultaneously, an expression of surprise.

"You had the courage to go to the Croners' cottage?" he exclaimed. "You went there alone?"

"No, not alone," said Miss Wilmore. "I am not quite so courageous as that. Mrs. Simon has always gone with me—good Christian woman that she is. She was very intimate with the Croners, in former days, and she and I have been there several times together. We used to get up early, and take some bread and milk before we started, and were back before breakfast; after carrying provisions to the poor creature. It really was nothing. We climbed the mountain quite early, before the heat began, and used to come back so slowly, and stop so frequently on our way down, under the trees, that Mrs. Simon used to do ever so much of her knitting on the way."

"I am not going to scold, since it has all ended well," said Mr. Clavel; "unfortunately, in this world, faults are often quickly forgiven, if they only prove successful, however hard one may be on them otherwise. You have certainly earned the right to go now by your past bravery in going at all; and, no doubt, the widow longs to see you. It seems to me that we had better ask good Mrs. Simon to come with us, and if she is detained on the mountain nurse can take baby with her, and go down to mind her child."

"That is just what I was thinking," said Helen.
"I will go and tell her at once."

"If you only knew," she added, as she put on the bonnet and shawl which the energetic little Lucy had already fetched for her; "if you only knew how happy I have often been during these visits to the At first, the poor woman received us mountain. with bitter defiance; but we persisted in our entreaties, until she came to welcome us gladly as her I knew that her wretched son had remained in the place for her sake, but the poor mother swore me to secrecy. I knew, also, that he was in a desperate state—threatening continually, to make away with himself; but she used to say that he was too much afraid of the judgment to come ever to do it. I never saw him, for he never came near the cottage until after nightfall."

A moment later, and Minna and Lucy were left alone under the large cedar-tree. Baby was at a little distance, playing with Pyrrhus, and shrieking with delight as the good-natured old dog allowed her to amuse herself by pulling his tail and ears. It was a glorious autumn afternoon, or rather it seemed as though summer, after having taken its departure, had put on its best holiday dress in its unwillingness to leave, and had come back unexpectedly to wish them a last farewell, and make every one more sorry than ever to part.

"Minna," said Lucy, "how accustomed you are

to be out of doors now; the sun is beginning to go down behind the poplars, and even the birds are thinking of going to rest, and it really is getting cold, yet you don't seem inclined to go in."

Minna made no reply, and Lucy raising her eyes to look at her, saw that large tears were rolling down her sister's cheeks and dropping on her work. did not often feel afraid of Minna now, and going up to her, she knelt down beside the couch, and kissed her hands tenderly. She did not speak a word for she knew well that Minna still suffered very much, though she had grown so submissive and affectionate under her trial. Minna had got to understand at length, at all events in some degree, that trial often does a great deal in the work of our education. She had compared Helen's firm yet gentle patience, with her own impetuosity, and Helen's devotion and self-denial, with her own selfish-. ness and exclusiveness. Helen, in speaking to her of the first years of her own youth, had described herself as having been quite as impetuous as she now was, and fully as much absorbed in dreams of her own future. The angelic sweetness and equanimity of her temper, and her entire submission to the most complete separation from all that she had held so dear, were therefore the blessed fruits of her heavy trial. Helen, even when feeling most

ill, always wore upon her countenance an expression of the most perfect happiness. Minna could remember having observed the same peculiar look—a sort of heavenly radiance—upon her mother's pale face, but she had not thought much about it then. Running about the woods, with her hair flying in the wind, she had led a life of thoughtless gaiety, which had been followed later by the wildest dreams of earthly delight.

But now, little by little, the young girl had attained to a kind of submission to her fate. Helen had succeeded in winning her over to return to certain habits of religion, and had led her to read her Bible regularly and to pray daily.

Miss Wilmore had also persuaded her to have a little class in her own room on Sunday afternoons. It was necessary to prepare the lessons for this, and thus little by little Minna came to take more and more interest in the Bible, and after a time she no longer read it mechanically, but with a real desire to understand it and profit by it. Often she delighted her father by asking him the meaning of different passages, and thus her soul became strengthened and supported by heavenly food, and she began to understand the happiness which Helen seemed continually to enjoy, and which was drawn from the love of holy things. Minna also now sometimes

felt herself raised above the sorrows of this life; but still there were days of discouragement, of relapse into old habits of discontent and despondency, as day after day passed without any signs of returning health.

Minna did not appear more ill than formerly. On the contrary, as time passed, she seemed to suffer less, and had gained a little more colour; but the illness had taken root, and she would never be really better. She felt it herself, and although in one way she was stronger and better able to bear the noise that went on in the house, she felt as firmly as ever that she would never walk again, and that this invalid life would be her future as it was her present fate.

Alas! she was not mistaken! The doctor no longer sought to encourage her as he used to do, by speaking of an almost certain cure. He tried rather to cheer her by pointing out to her the resources which she still possessed, the many interests which she had it in her power to create for herself, and the pleasures of mind and heart which God still placed within her reach. But after having lectured her gently on the duty of being cheerful, after having given her this or that thing to do—a little child to clothe or some papers to look through—he would leave her room with an air of depression quite unusual to his general cheerfulness of manner.

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Lucy had been present only a few days before, when he had confided to Mr. Clavel that he was growing more and more afraid that Minna's illness would end in hopeless paralysis, and that it was his wish to obtain the opinion of an able doctor at Strasbourg on the case of this dear little invalid whom he loved as though she were his own child. Minna had declared that she would have no other doctor except her old friend, and Mr. Vincent only spoke of the visitor he expected as of a former fellow-student who was coming to see him. But all the other members of the family looked forward with the greatest anxiety to the arrival of the strange doctor whose visit, as it seemed to them, was to decide the fate of the afflicted one so dear to them all.

"You see, Lucy," said Minna to her sister one day, forcing back the tears which would come, in spite of her efforts, "Miss Wilmore used to be delicate, and now she can go about, and do everything like other people; but I am always the same. I know it's wicked to feel as unhappy about it as I do sometimes; but I can't help it. If you only knew, Lucy, what it is to be always—always ill! To see everybody around one going where they wish, and doing what they want to do. Oh, if I were only older, and weaker, and had not got so much life in me! If I could only die!"

Lucy did not know what to say. She could only weep with her sister; and laying her rosy cheek against Minna's pale face, she kissed her over and over again.

"I don't mean to say that I envy Miss Wilmore. I hope I don't do that," continued Minna; "though when she was so weak, it used to be some little sort of comfort to me to feel that I was not the only sick one, and the only one who could not do anything. And now she is the good angel of the place. Everyone blesses her, wherever she goes. She is everybody's friend and comforter. Her trial is over."

"We are all so fond of you. You are everybody's pet, and she has no one to call her own."

"I know I am very wrong to speak as I do," said Minna; "but you must bear with me, Lucy. I love Miss Wilmore very much; and I hate myself for feeling as I sometimes do about her. But it does seem as though I were the only one who had to suffer, and that one day I shall be left to suffer alone. You will all go away, one by one. Even baby will go one day. Health, and happiness, and work will take you all away, and I shall be left alone."

Some one from behind Minna's sofa burst into tears. Looking round, she saw the old servant, Gertrude.

"My poor darling," she said, as she took the

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little head fondly between her hands, "who talks of leaving you alone, our own petted darling? Don't you see that you are our one thought all day long? Leave it to God, my child. Put your hand in His, and He will lead you right. No one is unhappy, in the end, who keeps close to Him. Those who love you now will love you always, every one of them, and old nurse amongst the first."

Minna raised her head, kissed Gertrude affectionately, and took her rough hand between her own. Her heart was comforted again.

"You don't know what I was bringing you," said the old woman, as she came from behind the couch, and stood before her; "look, Miss Minna!"

And taking a lovely white dove from her apron, she laid it softly on Minna's lap; Minna took it up gently, and kissed its soft feathers.

"Isn't it a beauty?" said Gertrude; "and what makes it more charming still, is that it comes from one of your little Sunday scholars. The poor child is sick, and is greatly troubled at not being able to come to your class. It is Céleste Richel, who lives so far off, down at the farm in the plain. She has sent you her own tame dove, that you may not forget her. And now we will go into the house."

CHAPTER XVII.

Market State of

FORGIVEN.

THE day had been long and the anguish great in the little cottage in the Oak-grove. But as the sun was sinking, and lighting up with its last rays the tips of the fir-trees, the soul of the poor widow Croner seemed about to enter into rest. The pallor of death was on her face, which still showed traces of great beauty. She was lying on her bed, with her head sunk back as though for the last sleep, and her lips half open. Everything in the room was in the greatest disorder clothes and old rags were lying about, all huddled together, while the fire-place was full of cinders, and the whole room covered with dust. It was easy to see at a glance that whatever work had been done in it, had been done by a man, who, however, had done all he could. Now, however, he was doing nothing. ting beside the bed he was watching her die, after a struggle which had been well nigh as painful for him as for her. He had provided for his mother faithfully ever since his father's death; he had risked his own life to preserve hers, often returning to the cottage in the dead of night to bring back to her the bread which he had been earning for her on the other side of the mountain. Still, when he saw that she was no longer suffering—he said to himself that it was much better for her to die than to live, and he left her quiet.

She was still breathing, and Max roused himself every now and then to listen, watching carefully for any unaccustomed sound in the forest. Nothing was to be heard but the bleating of the forgotten goat, who had been left unfed in the little wooden shed, and the last notes of the joyous birds who were going to sleep one by one.

Those whom Max was expecting did not arrive, and his poor mother had been asking for them all through the day. He rose at length and walked impatiently up and down the room. Any one who had only known him in the past days of his youth, would scarcely have recognized him now. His twenty-six years sat more heavily upon him than sixty years of hard labour do usually upon a strong man's frame. The brand of the criminal was upon his brow—his heavy, anxious brow which was covered with the thick matted locks of his neglected dark hair. He had no doubt become a charcoal-burner in a forest

beyond the Rhine, or perhaps he worked in some smithy or foundry, for his face and hands betokened the nature of his trade to be something of the kind. He had no wish to efface the traces of his occupation; on the contrary, he wished to look as unlike his former self as possible. It was easy, however, notwithstanding the grime and dust that stained his face, to perceive how pale as well as thin he had grown from suffering, and how his hollow cheeks seemed furrowed into deep lines by bitter and scalding tears.

The sound of his rapid strides aroused his mother, who seemed to recover consciousness, as she opened her large eyes, over which the film of death was already gathering, and stretched out her hands as though in search of something. Max drew near the bed, and took them within his own. Then leaning forward he kissed her forehead, which was already damp and cold.

"Mother," he said, "you are glad to die."

"Raise me up," she replied.

He did as he was requested.

"You will go away from here, my boy," she said; "you will go to some distant country, where you will be safe. You have been exposing your life to danger for my sake, and this has killed me; I have never been able to sleep,—no, not for four months!"

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"And what have I done?" he asked, in a voice choked with emotion.

"You used to weep the night through," she replied; "you used to weep and groan—I could hear you. Your bed was one of thorns, my poor, poor child. And to think that I should have brought you into the world for this!"

His sobs burst forth, but she continued in a hard and bitter tone, as though talking to herself—

"We had a grand holiday here the day that you were baptized; the pastor came up here, for the weather was cold, and we were afraid of carrying you so far, you were such a delicate little creature. He blessed you. I was afraid you were going to die, and I promised God to bring you up well if He spared you to me. It was all so bright. Our house and furniture were all new. Your father did not trouble himself about the Sibergs then. He was quite satisfied with his own condition, and we were happy. But since then, life has been wretched—very, very wretched. Max, I want to give you my blessing, you have been a good son to me."

"Oh, yes," he cried, "give me your blessing, mother, for when you are gone, no one else ever will."

"The good young English lady said that God would pardon all," replied the poor woman; "that

even if our sins were as red as crimson, they should be as white as snow, if they were washed in the blood of his holy Son, and were repented of. May God forgive you, my son. May He wash away your sins. May He open the gate of paradise wide enough for you to enter in, and find me there."

"Amen," said the poor criminal.

"But shall I be there?" she cried in agony. "Shall I ever go there? I have been a guilty sinner too. I did not warn you, or teach you, or correct you. I took no care of your soul. Oh, Max, I cannot pray for myself; I forget my prayers. Pray for me."

"I! mother! A wretch like me," he cried; "of what use would my prayers be? I should not dare to pray."

"There they are!" she exclaimed, raising herself in the bed.

Max hid his face in the pillow. He could not leave his mother; yet it was still impossible to look these people in the face.

Poor Widow Croner did not die before she had heard and fervently followed the words of the prayer for which she had longed. She died with her eyes fixed upon her son, as he knelt beside her bed. When all was over, Mr. Clavel led Max outside the house; and whilst Mrs. Simon and Helen performed

the last duties to his poor dead mother, and set the miserable room to rights, a touching scene took place between the pastor and the lost sheep of his flock, at a little distance from the house, under an old ruined wall. Mr. Clavel's work had, however, been prepared for him, the way had been made smooth for his mission; for he had before him a self-condemned sinner, smiting upon his breast and acknowledging his misery and guilt. Max was the first to acknowledge that his sin had been aggravated by the warnings and the advice which had sought to check him in his downward career. that the pastor now had to do, was to try and convince him that the forgiveness of God is offered to the guiltiest, and that his Fatherly hand is extended to all who come to Him for pardon. Clavel did not speak to Max of the past, except to tell him of the love and pity which he had felt for him throughout; assuring him that at the very time when he was heart-broken with grief for his sin, his only desire had been to save his sinful soul. He took the man's cold trembling hands within his own, and the poor criminal felt that, though his mother was taken from him, there was still one friend left to him on earth, who did not curse him. In heaven above, moreover, was the Saviour who was looking down upon him, with a mercy that knows no bounds, and was holding out to him a merciful hand. Then they spoke together of the future, and of beginning a new life in a distant country. Happiness for Max was over for ever in this world. A horrible recollection, a tormenting remorse, would come between him and the most lawful enjoyment, all through life. But in the new country to which he would go as a stranger, he might, perhaps, be allowed to do good to others; and oh, if God would only allow him to consecrate all the time and strength that yet remained to him to the service of the Saviour who was willing to forgive him so much.

"All that I can earn," he said to Mr. Clavel, in a trembling voice, "I should like to send to her—to the child? But no, no," he added; "she would take nothing from me. I can do nothing for her; all that came from me would be stained with blood."

"Leonore is a Christian," said Mr. Clavel. "She has never cursed you. She has always been sorry for you, and has long ago forgiven you. She prays daily for you—dear Christ-like soul that she is."

"Oh," cried Max, "would that I could cast myself at her feet, and hear that I am pardoned from her own lips."

"When you have reached your destination, write to her," said the pastor.

Max wrung his hands in agony of soul, "I shall

never be able to make reparation," he cried. "Gladly would I shed my blood; but it would be of no use. The happiness of her whole life is wrecked by me—by me who professed to love her. And thus it is that I have shown my love!"

"When will you bury my mother?" he asked abruptly, after a few moments of mournful silence.

"To-morrow, about this time, we will carry her to Burgwald."

"To Burgwald! where he is? You will not lay her near him? But it was not her fault, poor dear mother, she never knew how wicked I was; and she had always taught me to say my prayers!"

He rose suddenly.

"I am going back to her," he said, "I will never leave her until I see you coming to-morrow. You will think of me, Mr. Clavel, you will write to me, you will comfort me."

And he burst into tears.

The pastor rose also, and placing a small purse in Max Croner's hands, he said,

"I found this in a drawer in my dear wife's bureau after her death. It is money which she had laid up for any of our dear parishioners, who might be in some unexpected trouble; if she were alive now, Max, she would beg you to accept it with gentle words, such as I know not how to speak."

Max's hands trembled yet more than ever, but he took the purse, and they returned together in silence to the cottage.

Miss Wilmore was at that moment clasping the hands of the dead woman upon her breast. A little lamp shed a dim light through the room. Good Mrs. Simon was preparing some refreshment on the table, with the provisions which they had brought with them. Max turned and left the room again. Returning shortly afterwards, they saw that he had washed his face, which now looked well nigh as white as the pillow on which they had laid his dead mother's head. He had also arranged his dress and brushed the thick locks of his dark hair into as much order as was possible. Going straight up to Helen, he said,

"You have been a good angel to my mother. I have heard you myself tell her that there was pardon in heaven for her unhappy son. May God restore tenfold to your own bosom all the consolation that you have poured into hers . . . And the young man who spoke to me like a brother, the other night in the forest," he continued, turning to Mr. Clavel, "tell him I shall never cease to pray to God to bless him . . . And you, my poor mother Simon, you held me in your arms when first I came into this sad, sad world; you have been a faithful friend to my broken-hearted mother. Oh!

let me shake hands with you just this once more, for my dead mother's sake."

Mrs. Simon burst into tears as she held out her hand, and turned away sobbing towards the bed where the widow lay so peacefully.

Helen came forward quietly, and offered her hand to Max. He seized it and grasped it fervently.

"God bless you all!" he said, and covering his face with both his hands, he sat down on the chair beside the bed, his strong frame shaking with his sobs.

Mr. Clavel placed beside him on the bed, his own New Testament, open at the Saviour's words of peace to all who are weary and heavy laden; then drawing Helen from the room, and signing to Mrs. Simon to follow, they left the cottage, and closed the door gently behind them.

Many times did Helen Wilmore turn to watch the light shining through the window, and wonder what was going on within. The scene that had just passed remained on her memory for ever.

No one spoke, as they descended the steep mountain side on this dark night. Mrs. Simon led the way, for she knew the road well. As Max had said, she had been a good friend to Widow Croner for many years, and a constant visitor at the cottage, and her visits had been more frequent in the day of adversity than in the day of prosperity.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ARNOLD'S MOTHER.

MAX CRONER had not judged the villagers correctly. At first, indeed, the feeling against him had been one of universal horror; but gradually the pastor's influence and example had led others to share the feelings of pity for the criminal with which the divine Master had inspired him. Many amongst them heard of his repentance with thankful joy, and felt true sorrow at the thought of his blighted life, and his intended departure to the distant country, where he would, in all probability, die in friendless In the Black Valley, where his name was never mentioned, all felt a secret sympathy when they heard of the death of his poor mother. Both at Burgwald and Tournèges, many true Christians were found ready to come forward and offer to follow the widow to her grave, even though they had to go through heavy rain and wind all the way to the cottage in the Oak-grove.

That evening, when all were resting quietly beside their own hearths, a thick smoke rose above the tops of the oaks and the firs. As the wind carried it away in gusts, they saw flames ascending to the sky.

"It is the Croners' cottage," they cried. "It is on fire!"

It had soon passed, and as the last flames died away, many an eye in the village was wet with tears.

Max wished that the spot should bear the traces of the desolation of his own life, and in destroying all that belonged to him, he asked to be forgotten by all. But there were some at Burgwald, who would never forget, but always pray.

After that day, with some few little episodes, the life of all resumed its usually regular and somewhat monotonous course. The lingering summer, which seemed to tarry behind, until winter had almost overtaken it, still allowed the two families to meet on fine days under the great cedar. Arnold's mother arrived on the first day that he left his bed, and was received by Mrs. Vincent, and indeed by all, as an old friend. The doctor's house was so small, that she took up her abode at the Parsonage, where spare rooms abounded. All were prepared to love her, for they knew her son, and had heard much from him of his mother, and her noble self-denying

life. Yet even if this had not been so, she would have won all hearts at once, by the charm of character and manner which she possessed. Still, in spite of the sweetness of her voice and expression, there was a certain dignity of demeanour about her, which inspired a slight feeling of awe. It was a dignity such as few women possess who have not been thrown on their own resources, and known what it is to struggle with life, maintaining their own self-respect, and securing the respect of others in the midst of misfortune and misery.

Lucy, who had intended, beforehand, to rush into her arms, drew back at the sight of her, with a timid, "how do you do?" and led the way, gravely, to the room prepared for her, which she had adorned with flowers.

Mrs. Frénois said little, yet it was easy to see how deeply touched she was by the welcome she had received; and how fully and gratefully she appreciated all the kindness that had been shown to Arnold, though she did not load her new friends with thanks, or any warm assurances of gratitude. She had never yet accepted a favour from anybody, but now she received all attentions and kindnesses, happily, and seemed quite at her ease amongst her son's friends; while without offering to help anyone, she made herself of use to all. Soon, old Gertrude

gave up coming to do her room in the morning, for she found everything done before she came. However early she might arrive, Mrs. Frénois was beforehand with her; the room was in perfect order, and she herself, in simple morning dress, reading or working by the window. Soon afterwards, baby was to be heard trotting along the passage for her usual morning visit to the "nice new 'ady," and the nurse, freed from her prattling, meddling little charge, found it easy to get through her morning work very quickly. In the meanwhile Mrs. Frénois was recalling, for the little orphan's sake, all the old nursery tales, and all the childish songs and rhymes with which she used to delight her little Arnold in the by-gone days. By and by, Lucy's turn came, and as nurse fetched baby away, she arrived for her music lesson, and took great pains with it; for Mrs. Frénois was a wonderful musician, and to be taught by her was a rare opportunity, which Lucy herself fully appreciated, and gratefully resolved to make the most of.

The first walks which Arnold was able to take with his mother, as health and strength returned, were an intense joy to both. He delighted in introducing her to all his favourite spots, with many of which his letters had already made her familiar, yet which she felt she had never fully appreciated until now. It was his special joy to take her to the

mountain, and to make her breathe the exhilarating air which he could see was already tinging her pale cheeks with a delicate colour, which softened the expression of the regular features, and seemed daily to give a sweeter tone to the somewhat severe character of her beautiful face. They talked together for hours of the friends on whom they both felt they could henceforth depend for ever; and would finish the happy tête-à-tête walk by a delightful evening spent in the midst of those family joys which until now Arnold had never tasted. There are strong characters who'do not easily bend under trial; they stand up, as it were, against it, and feel as if God were too hard upon them. One cannot help feeling as if a touch of sunshine would do much in developing in their hearts a feeling of warm trust in God, and that love for Him which is so comforting to the afflicted soul. It was so with Arnold's mother. Trial had wounded her heart, and she had proudly hardened herself against it, without complaining, but without seeking true consolation from the God who, for His own wise and loving purposes, had destroyed her earthly happiness. At Strasbourg, to which place she had gone as an utter stranger fifteen years ago, she had made no acquaintances. It was all she could do to maintain her child and herself, and it was easier she said to herself to struggle on alone,

and without any witness to her sufferings and privations. Her proud energetic character enabled her to do without any help, and she would rather have sunk under the weight of her burden than solicit any; so she had refrained from knowing any one except her music pupils and their parents. Before her misfortunes came, Mrs. Frénois had always lived in the country, and had many true friends; but she did not think that it was possible for her to make any in her new circumstances. In the busy crowd that surrounded her, all seemed taken up with their own affairs, and the weight of her own entire isolation seemed by contrast to press upon her more heavily than ever. The parents of her pupils rarely spoke to her on any other subject than that of their children's proficiency in music, and no one showed her the sympathy which leads to confidence and trust. wish was ever awakened in her mind to change the decision she had made of shutting herself up entirely in herself, and allowing no other eye to read the sad pages of her life's story. Her son was her only friend, her confidant, her all. She wept over him when she could no longer restrain her tears. poured forth upon him the love and tenderness which overflowed in her heart. The child's smiles and caresses in earlier days, and in later years the love he showed her, and her pride in him, often kept up her

spirit when, but for him, it must have sunk and given way. The boy, too, was a tie between her and God. He obliged her to acknowledge that she still had one treasure left to her, and as she watched the gradual development of his character, and the rare combination of strength, talent, and tenderness which it exhibited, she was led to pour out her heart to God in prayer for him.

Mrs. Frénois arrived at Tournèges with her heart full of tender emotion at the thought of seeing her son again after the first separation they had ever known; Mr. Vincent went to meet her, and brought tears of joy into her eyes as he spoke to her of the love which all felt for the young tutor. Arnold told her all that had happened to him since they last met, and her heart melted as she heard what this sojourn in the humble village had done for his soul; how it had led him to faith in Jesus, and inspired him with the desire to consecrate his whole existence to the service of the Saviour, who had sought and saved him by his great love. Arnold and his mother prayed together. They read together that blessed Gospel which is a letter of life addressed by God to all who are in sorrow, and little by little the hidden happiness which filled his soul found their way into hers also. She understood then the true cause of the desolation and emptiness which had been breaking her heart

through all these dreary years. Mrs. Frénois had been brought up religiously. But the only religion she had ever known had been a strict cold morality, void of all faith in Christ and all love to Him, and knowing nothing of the consolations or the glorious hopes of the Gospel. Until now, not one ray of heaven's own sunshine had found its way into the darkened lonely chamber of the widow's heart.

The days went by unheeded at Tournèges; each happier than the last. Still the vacation was drawing steadily to a close, though all were too happy to perceive its flight, and towards the end of October the happy party had to be broken up. Not only must Mrs. Frénois and her son leave, but the two boys must go too. What would they do all through the coming winter, without these dear ones? Poor Minna, who had become very much attached to Arnold's mother, and had spent many a happy hour with her, was heard to breathe many a sigh which Lucy re-echoed, as, together, the two sisters worked at the trousseau they were preparing for Charlie.

A happy thought found its way into Mrs. Vincent's mind, filled as it was with motherly anxiety for her boy. Still she would never have had the courage to say anything about it, if she had not perceived the loving interest with which Mrs. Frénois laid aside her own occupations, to work with all her energies

for the two boys, and heard her say, in reply to some thanks on the subject, that "no thanks were needed for what she enjoyed doing for boys dear to her asthese were."

Then Mrs. Vincent took courage, and asked if it could not be arranged for Richard and Charlie to live with her. All was speedily settled. To have Charlie always near him, to be as an elder brother to him, to be able still to help him in his studies, was a delightful idea to the young tutor. Charlie rejoiced equally in the plan, and giddy little Richard was well pleased also. They would be a happy family, Mrs. Frénois felt convinced.

CHAPTER XIX.

A MOURNFUL DAY.

Lucy and Charlie could not now be parted for an The poor child had packed and unpacked her brother's trunk three or four times before Gertrude came to pack it in good earnest, and fasten it up. She was constantly finding something new which he was sure to want, something for which it was absolutely necessary that a place should be found. was no end to the things which she positively declared she was sure Charlie could not do without; favourite books which they had read together, times without end; curiosities collected during their many, many rambles together in the woods; souvenirs which had belonged to their mother, and which she was sure he would not like to leave behind. And then she had prepared a variety of little surprises for him which he was to know nothing about until he unpacked the precious trunk at Strasbourg; and some

of these must be put at the very bottom. On the evening before the day that had been fixed upon for the journey, Lucy's own little cabinet, which had stood from time immemorial in the drawing-room, contained next to nothing of all the precious possessions which were kept there. Some boys might, perhaps, have laughed at this devotion on the part of his sister, who robbed her little museum of itstreasures, in the hope of pleasing him; but Lucy was not afraid of her brother's doing so. Charlie: was a large-hearted boy, who knew how to value all that came from so true a source as the love that lived in his little sister's heart. Gertrude had told him how, for a long time now, she could not get the poor child to go to sleep until she knew that her brother had done so too, and had stolen into his room to shed some few tears beside him. His heart was often overcome by the sorrowful, wistful looks, which were constantly cast upon him by the loving sister whose bright face was losing more and more of its joyous expression every day; but he strove to be brave and manly, and to put on an appearance of composure which was not altogether in unison with his hidden feelings.

The afternoon was cold and gloomy, and the wind blew and whistled, and made itself felt and heard in every corner of the house. Charlie was at work in his room, leaning on the sill of the window. In order to make up for the time that had been lost during his illness, Mr. Frénois and his pupils had been working diligently every morning through the vacation, in the desire which they mutually felt, that the boys should take a good place at school.

"You can pack up all these old books in grey covers," he said to his sister as she came in, after secretly slipping a pretty mother-of-pearl knife into the pocket of her brother's new greatcoat.

Lucy shuddered at the thought.

"There is no more room, I assure you, Charlie," she said, trying to press down the cover of the trunk, which persistently sprang up again at every fresh effort on her part.

"Nonsense, Lucy," he cried, "my books must go, whatever else has to be left behind. Let me see if I can't manage to get them in."

"Oh, no, no," she cried, keeping him back with both her hands; "I am sure you wouldn't vex me, Charlie. Stop," she added, "leave your books on the floor with the rest of the things that have to go, and I will ask Gertrude to finish packing them. I don't know how she will do it, but I'm sure she will be able to get everything in somehow."

Charlie could not see either how it was to be managed, for there were as many things out of the trunk and carpet-bag as there were in them; but both the children had unbounded faith in Gertrude, who had often performed things which had seemed to them impossible.

"Now do let us go," said Lucy, "I must get ready."

Charlie looked at the silver watch which had been given him for the occasion.

"It is three o'clock already," he said, "and every one will be wanting to keep us, you must make haste, Lucy."

They had already paid several rounds of farewell visits in the neighbourhood of Tournèges. To-day had been reserved for the village itself, where Charlie had to give and receive many a parting word and embrace to those who had known him from his birth, and whose houses were as familiar to him as his own. There was not a cottage in the place of which he did not know every corner. He had carried messages to one and all of them. He had taken shelter in them in sudden showers. He had paid visits of condolence or congratulation, as the case might be. Everywhere he was loved. Everywhere blessings were showered down upon his head. On all sides were the same words repeated from the depth of the heart.

"No one will forget you, Master Charlie; we shall all be longing for the holidays." What a blank the boy's absence would make! Every one in the village spoke of it. At the Parsonage no one dared to think about it. How every one would miss his bright face, his laughing brown eyes which always had a smile for everybody, the merry songs which he went about singing, his laughter which rang through the house—the life and gaiety that he carried everywhere with him.

Still, a great change had come over Charlie during the last year. There were some who would remember him with a grave face and tearful eyes. Ever since his mother had left him, the boy, gay and giddy as he still appeared when in company with others, was generally grave and thoughtful as soon as he was left alone.

Minna did not come down, or rather we should say she was not carried down to the drawing-room that evening. She would have been alone, for there was a farewell supper at the Vincents'. It was six o'clock, Mrs. Frénois had just gone up to the doctor's house, and only baby was left at home. Minna reflected on the coming separation, and wished now that she could keep with her the brother whom she had formerly repulsed by her coldness. Ah! it is very sad for us when our eyes are opened to see the wrongs which it is no longer in our power to repair. Minna understood now how much she had herself

lost by neglecting her brother so long. She felt now how bitterly disappointed Charlie must often have been when he received only reproaches and fault-finding from her, instead of a return of the tender love and counsel which he had lost in his mother, and no doubt had hoped to find again in his elder sister.

Gertrude had lighted a little fire in her bed-room. Baby was playing at the table with some dominoes which she knocked down one by one, and which, alas, Minna could not help her to pick up. Minna, lying on the couch by her side, kissed the little rosy hands, from time to time, in an abstracted manner. Then fixing her eyes on the window, she watched the sky listlessly. The wind was driving the heavy threatening clouds towards the house as if a last thunderstorm was about to burst over the place. But the wind was so strong that it drove away the clouds one by one, before they had time to burst in rain or hail.

Lucy came into the room—and then Charlie. They kissed their sister, and, each taking a chair, sat down beside the fire, pale with cold and perhaps with sadness also. Lucy laid on Minna's lap a late rose, the petals of which were already withered.

"It is from mamma's grave," she said.

"Has Charlie gathered one?" Minna asked. Charlie opened his pocket-book, and showed her his rose carefully placed between two white pages. He intended to carry it about with him everywhere.

"You are going to stay in your room this evening?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, in rather a melancholy tone, since you are all going out."

"I shall not go to the Vincents'," said Charlie resolutely. "I have been wanting an excuse for staying at home all day, and now I have got one. I have a headache, and am not a bit fit to go We will stay here together, you and I, Minna, and make ourselves very comfortable."

Minna held out her hand to him, and drew him towards her. She made him stoop down to kiss her, and for the first time in his life, Charlie felt his thick curls parted by his sister's soft hand, and a long kiss imprinted by her lips on his forehead.

"Your head is burning indeed," said Minna in a tone of uneasiness. "Gertrude shall fetch you an arm-chair and a pillow, and make you a good cup of tea. Go and ask her, Lucy, and take Baby away with you, she makes too much noise."

Charlie raised some objections at first, but his head really ached badly, so he yielded at last and allowed himself to be made extremely comfortable by the old nurse, who soon returned with the teatray.

"You have only brought two cups," said Lucy, pathetically, "do you think I really must go to the Vincents'?"

"Oh, yes, Lucy, go," said Charlie, "we must not both stay away; and tell papa, who is not coming back here from the village, before he meets you there, that it is only one of my bad headaches."

Lucy went off with a full heart, after giving him a good kiss.

Minna begged her brother in vain to take something besides the cup of tea. Though he kept saying that it was only one of his headaches, but rather worse than usual, she saw that he seemed scarcely able to move, as he lay back in the arm-chair with his eyes shut.

Later in the evening, Gertrude, who saw that Minna was growing uneasy, brought her work, and came to sit in the room. Charlie was asleep. She laid her hand on his.

"Do you think he is feverish?" Minna asked, eagerly.

"A little, perhaps," said Gertrude, not liking to say all that was in her mind. "Poor boy! I believe he is a great deal more sorry to go away than he would let any of us see; and he has been running about here, there, and everywhere, to keep himself from thinking too much about it. And yet it isn't as if he were leaving his mother," she added.
"The house has changed a good deal for him of late, poor boy."

"Only for him," said Minna, rather reproachfully.

"Ah," said Gertrude, "I mean that he has had more trouble than any one has supposed. The boy is not always dull and sad, but it's easy enough to see that he suffers all the same. been days when it has made me miserable to see him, poor little fellow, especially before Mr. Arnold came, and before they were so friendly together; when your papa was obliged to go out, or used to spend the evening with you, and Miss Lucy would be up at Miss Wilmore's. I have watched him many times, wandering about like a lost child, without seeming to know where he was going. I have seen him roam about the garden, and then go up to his little room, where your dear mamma used often to sit with him, and help him in his work. After a time he would come down and stop with me in my kitchen; and often we've had a good hug over our sorrow, without speaking a word about it. An old nurse like me, who has brought up the children herself from their birth, loves them like a mother, and it comforts them to feel it. And then boys are not given to speaking of their feelings; but it does them good to be understood and sympathized with."

Minna was crying now, as she watched her sleeping brother. Gertrude had not meant to say anything to grieve her. On the contrary, she was always ready to excuse her young mistress, even in the moments when she had been the most unapproachable, when all the care she lavished on her seemed like struggling against the tide. It had never occurred to Gertrude that Minna had anything to do in the house, since her illness, except to allow herself to be coddled, and to be the centre of every one's attentions. And now that the invalid was less gloomy, more gentle, more submissive, what more could one ask of her. Surely all that one could expect of her was to bear patiently the great trial which she had been called to endure.

But Minna's conscience told her otherwise, and her heart told her otherwise too, now that her love for her brother had been suddenly awakened. How much happier would she herself have been, if she had only sought to fulfil the mission which her mother had bequeathed to her by seeking to draw Charlie to her, by showing him the sympathy and interest of a friend and elder sister! How much she would have been drawn out of her own sorrows by the very effort to be of use to him. Instead of this, by ne-

glecting her brother—so affectionate as he was too—she had deprived herself of better joys than any that health and youth can give; she had heaped up regrets for herself for the day of separation. Gertrude had felt almost heart-broken when she was describing poor little Charlie's trials, as he wandered about, hiding his real desolation of heart under an apparent giddiness of manner. She sat watching the little pale face, as it lay on the pillow. It was a sweet face, with all the charm of extreme youth about it, and yet marked with an expression which betokened thought, and enthusiasm, and high-mindedness.

"He is sure to come home at Christmas," she thought; "papa won't keep him away longer than that, and if not at Christmas, he will certainly come at Easter, and then I will be such a good friend to him; we will be always together."

And she made Gertrude wheel her chair closer to him, and laid her hand on his head.

"Oh, how hot it is!" she exclaimed. She had taken away her hand; but Charlie opened his eyes, and reaching out his, took it again, and replaced it on his hot forehead.

"It does me good," he said. "And Gertrude is here too! How kind you both are! It would be delightful to be here, if I did not feel so ill. I think I must go to bed. . . . I wonder what can be

the matter with me," he added, as he made an attempt to stand, and fell back in his chair, quite unable to do so.

"Don't be uneasy," said Minna; "it's only one of your bad headaches, perhaps this room has been too hot for you. We must make you quite well before you go to Strasbourg."

"Come," said Gertrude, taking him gently by the arm, "I will go upstairs with you, and help you to get to bed, as I used to do in the old days, when you were a little fellow, and never would let anybody do anything for you except me."

"We love each other every bit as much now," said Charlie, with a loving smile. "Come along."

And he allowed the old nurse to lead him away, after kissing his sister affectionately.

When Mr. Clavel and Lucy returned, they went up to his room, to wish him good night. There was nothing very alarming in a sick headache. A night's rest would be sure to set it all right. They told him how sorry the Vincents had been at his not being able to come, and how much everyone had missed him; and then his father and sister left him, without even suspecting that Gertrude was feeling anxious, and had made up her mind to sit up with him. Even if they had known it, they might not perhaps have felt very uneasy. Gertrude was rather given to

sitting up at night. No one could have told how many nights she had spent, sitting in the large white arm-chair, beside the bed of one or other of the children, dozing as lightly as possible, and waking at the slightest sound, whenever her anxiety allowed her to sleep at all.

CHAPTER XX.

ANOTHER EMPTY PLACE.

THE next evening, which was Friday, Charlie's two travelling companions came to wish him good-bye. They were to start without him early the next more. ing. College was to begin on the following Monday. Arnold and Richard went up to the little bed-room, where they found Lucy sitting beside her brother, reading a story to which he did not seem to be pay-ing any great attention. The boy was not suffering nearly so much as yesterday, but he had not beenable to leave his bed. A slow fever had set in, his headache, he said, half jokingly, had become chronic, and he felt in a kind of stupor which he could not shake off. He did not seem to care at all about his friends going without him. Plans were discussed, and arrangements made as to when he would be able to go, and what would be the best way for him to join them; but he took very little interest in anything that was going on. All he wanted was to be

left alone, with one or another of his own dear ones sitting quietly beside him.

Richard came up to him to say good-bye in a dignified style. He was dressed in new clothes from head to foot, and evidently felt exceedingly proud of himself. He made sure of seeing his friend again in a day or two, and he did not foresee the tears that were in store for himself and his poor mother next morning.

After the parting with Charlie came the tragicomic farewell with his other playfellow, Lucy—who presented him, as a last gift, with an enormous butterfly pen-wiper for his desk at college.

Richard had taken himself off to wish good-bye to the rest of the house, and Arnold Frénois remained by the bedside still holding Charlie's hand.

"How much I should like to wait for you," he said.

"That isn't possible, I know," replied Charlie; "but," he added, in a lower voice, "if I were to get worse, you would come back . . . after your examinations."

"I hope I shall come back any way," said Arnold.

"I am to come and fetch you if your father cannot bring you to Strasbourg himself, which I scarcely think he will be able to do; and if I come for you, I will take you for a little trip along the Rhine before

we go to Strasbourg. You have often wished for this, haven't you?"

"Oh yes," said Charlie, whilst a smile passed over his face, "I have longed for it. But I wonder what makes me so very, very weak?" he added, as he closed his eyes again, and his head fell back, whilst a deadly pallor overspread his face, as though he were about to faint.

Arnold and Lucy tended him, bathed his face and hands with eau-de-Cologne, and placed a handker-chief steeped in water on his forehead. He said he felt better and inclined to sleep. Arnold could not summon up courage to say farewell again; he wished Lucy good-bye with all a brother's love, and if he had not hurried off abruptly he might not have had courage to go at all.

From that day the illness went on steadily, making slow but sure progress. The Parsonage became once more one of those solemn houses, where voices are lowered to a whisper, and doors are closed noiselessly, and people tread on tip-toe, and where those who meet one another dare not speak of the agonizing fear which is in all minds, but which is only allowed to break forth in cries to God in the secrecy of one's own chamber. These are the days when one lives in realities. All the bitterness of life is in them with all that stern solemnity of sorrow

which is so soon forgotten when it has passed out of sight—but all the reality and eternity of hope are in them also. Earth appears in its desolation, adorned no more with flowers or sunshine, but heaven draws nearer—the way to the heavenly country is opened, and intense anguish is met by intense consolation.

Mr. Vincent was to be pitied. A doctor can never be himself in his own family-his glance is uncertain-his hand trembles, his judgment is not to be relied on. He attended Charlie because there was no one else to whom he could or would have intrusted him. But almost at every step that it was necessary to take, he hesitated, and doubted. Had it been any other child, he would have felt sure what to do, but in the case of this boy, almost as dear to him as if he were his own, he was constantly hesitating between three or four different measures, and asking himself what some one else would do in the same circumstances. Still he felt sure what illness he had to deal with. It was that illness which carries off so many victims, and whose beginnings are often so deceitful that they do not inspire sufficient alarm.

The physician who had been summoned arrived at last, and pronounced it to be typhoid fever. They had known it before. At the same time he confirmed Mr. Vincent's worst fears about Minna. She insisted on being told the whole truth immediately

after the consultation was over, but the unfavourable verdict, which might have overpowered her some days before, scarcely seemed to affect her now. She no longer thought of the future.

"If I could only help to nurse my brother," she said, the tears pouring down her cheeks. "Oh, if I could only help to nurse him, I should not care for anything else."

They wished to remove Charlie to the floor below, and place him in his father's large bed-room. It would be more airy, and Minna would be able to be more with him. They spoke of the plan before him, not supposing him to be conscious.

"I wish to stay in my own room," he said, in a pleading tone; "do let me stay here."

They all knew why he did not wish to leave his little attic. He felt as if he had his mother with him there, so full of associations was this room to him. Not long before her death, she had had the room done up as a surprise for him. It was entirely furnished with blue: the paper, curtains, and bedfurniture, were all of a pretty pale blue chintz. Over the writing-table, which was still laden with heavy dictionaries, and on which lay his last Latin theme, hung a picture in a pretty gilt frame. It was a water-colour sketch of a lovely young girl, and Charlie valued this early portrait of his mother above

all his other earthly possessions. Its smile, and its tender expression, carried him back, continually, to the happy days when she used to sit by his bed, after hearing his evening prayer, and pass her hand lovingly through the thick locks that were brown and curly like her own.

There were several other pictures in his little room: some of them were sketches from nature, taken by his mother, framed with branches of ivy-wood from the forest; and others were old family miniatures, of which he had taken possession, pretending that he had the first right to them. He had a considerable amount of family pride, and intended, some day, to make out a genealogical family tree. On the chimney-piece were two pretty vases filled with wild roses; his watch hung between them, in a little embroidered case given him by Miss Wilmore.

Mr. Clavel never left his boy, except to go to Minna, who was in an agony of mind. On the day that Arnold Frénois's first letter arrived, telling of his own successful examination, and Richard's admission into the college, the Pastor wrote, imploring him to return.

Charlie was constantly asking for him. Even when most delirious, he always knew who was near him, and a smile passed over his face when any one whom he loved came in, after having been some time absent from the room. Night and morning, his father prayed beside him, and he always seemed to join in his prayers. He returned every kiss, and every pressure of the hand; but he rarely spoke, and his eyes were almost always closed, even though the room was dark. The illness was more characterized by this state of extreme prostration, than by any violent crisis. The hours passed monotonously; but without any one being able to shake off the feeling for an instant, that from one moment to another, some terrible change might take place. Little by little, the unhappy father perceived what fearful ravages this slow but terrible malady was making. The boy's hands, which he held for hours in his own, were growing more and more transparent; the beloved face was changing visibly every day. The doctor from Strasbourg prolonged his stay at Tournèges; but when the twenty-first day of illness had passed, without bringing any change, he was obliged to return, leaving Mr. Vincent burdened with a heavy load of responsibility. He had, however, entirely approved of the treatment that had been adopted, and had endeavoured to inspire his colleague with confidence in himself; for he fully appreciated the tact and skill of the good village doctor. Mr. Clavel's trust was in prayer, and in the knowledge that the doctor also was a man of prayer, who looked to God for direction in every measure he adopted, and for a blessing on the result. Charlie was tenderly watched and nursed; his father often said to himself, with deep gratitude, that he could not have been more lovingly tended, had his mother been still with him.

Did Charlie miss his mother? For some days now, he had kept his eyes almost constantly open, but a strange, unearthly expression was in them. They appeared to be looking into the invisible world, and smiling upon the angels. It seemed as though his spirit had spread its wings ready to take flight to heaven, and that it was with difficulty that it could be recalled to earth. For an instant, the sweet face would resume its natural expression, as he recognized the dear ones around him; but as soon as they ceased to speak to him, his eyes, which had become extraordinarily large and limpid, appeared fixed again on a vision which he alone saw. Does not the same heavenly vision support many souls at the moment when all that is of earth is fading from them?

We cannot see what these departing souls see; but we know that they behold ineffable sights—sights for which the price paid is not too costly, though they be bought with mortal agonies. Often the remembrance of their last look of rapture is sufficient to sustain our own souls until the moment when

we, too, are called upon to pass through the dark valley.

Arnold Frénois arrived before this last change had taken place—on the only day of real suffering which Charlie had yet had. There must always be one struggle, one revolt of nature, against its enemy, Death. Towards evening, he fell into a sweet repose, and an unmistakable expression rested on the placid face. No one spoke of hope now, at least of any earthly hope. No one now dreamed of keeping on earth the beloved child who had been so dear to all.

Mr. Clavel fell upon his knees beside the bed, and, in a voice broken by sobs, offered up his sacrifice, earnestly beseeching his heavenly Father to be with his child in the last hour, and spare him all lengthened suffering.

After that, they waited. Their hearts were almost bursting at every deep-drawn sigh. They never took their eyes off the beautiful face of the heavenly child, who was only to be with them now for a very few more hours.

Minna had not slept for several nights. By day she was carried into her brother's room; but at night she lay awake, listening anxiously for the faintest sound, wondering what was going on upstairs. It was Saturday night—almost Sunday morning. Minna had been carried to her room, but had refused to undress. They laid her on her bed, and for the first time for several nights she fell into a heavy sleep, which lasted some hours. All at once she awoke, with a sudden start. She rang the bell with a trembling hand.

"Charlie is dying! I am sure he is," she said to the old nurse, clinging to her neck.

Gertrude was trembling, too; yet she succeeded in raising the young girl in her arms, with wonderful strength.

"He is sinking fast," she said, with a violent effort at self-control; "but you will see him again. He will speak to you. He has asked for you, and I was coming to fetch you."

Minna sat beside her beloved brother; and his eyes were fixed on her, with a look of the tenderest love and the fullest confidence.

Arnold supported her in his arms. The bed had been drawn into the middle of the room. Mr. Clavel was kneeling on the other side.

Gertrude, always practical, even when sorrow pressed heaviest, was moistening, with gooseberry juice, the white and parched lips of the dying boy. Lucy had thrown herself, half-dressed, on her knees by the bed, and was resting her cheek on one of her brother's hands, which was hanging motionless by his side, stifling her sobs.

Charlie had recovered sufficient consciousness for a few minutes to be able to speak to the dear ones around him.

"I love you all," he said; "I love you dearly. I wish I could take you all with me—even baby. I want to kiss her. I have often been wicked. I ask every one to forgive me."

He fixed his eyes on Arnold Frénois, and continued—

I had one great secret wish: I wanted to be a missionary, and go with you to look for poor Max; but you had better stay with your mother. And you will comfort papa. . . . You will help him, and be like a son to him. . . . I think I should have been a better boy if I had recovered. I meant to try. I wished to do everything to please God, and show my love to Him and Jesus Christ; but I shall be able to keep all my good resolutions much better in heaven. Oh! how much I love you! How good you have all been to me!" he repeated, casting a farewell look around. "Minna, comfort papa and Lou-Lou. I know she will miss me. Oh, Minna, love everybody, and you won't be sad."

His voice failed him.

"Let me go to sleep now," he said, turning his head on one side. "Sing me a hymn! one of mamma's hymns. Gertrude, kiss me—hold me in your arms."

There was one short convulsive struggle, and all was over. Whilst they were singing the same hymn on which their beloved mother's soul had been wafted to heaven, Charlie left them. Whilst little Marie, who had been brought to him, warm from her cradle, was leaning her fair head against his face for the kiss he wanted, his spirit passed from earth to paradise.

CHAPTER XXI.

A TETE-A-TETE.

SEVERAL months had passed when we again find ourselves in Helen Wilmore's pleasant room. The month was March, and the weather cold. A pretty china lamp was burning on the round table, and shedding its cheerful light on the tea-tray with its shining tea-pot and white cups and saucers. The boiling water was hissing in the bright tea-urn, singing the merry song, which, like many other noises of little consequence in themselves, have the power of speaking to the soul, recalling many tender recollections and associations.

Old Gertrude was sitting beside the young governess, looking very comfortable and quite ready to drink the tea which was being poured out for her. The invitation had been of long standing, but she had never been able to leave the Parsonage until now, when young Mrs. Simon, little Marie's former nurse,

had come up from her own house to go and take charge of the Parsonage and Marie, in order that Gertrude might come and drink tea with Miss Wil-She had just arrived, and as she sits quietly in her chair watching Miss Wilmore acting the part of hostess, we take a good look at her, and find her a good deal changed since last we saw her. Many, many tears have been shed during these last two years-and tears shed in secret leave their marks behind them at last. The suffering which is concealed by courage and energy will commit more ravages in the long run than the grief, however great, which is allowed daily to find its free vent. Helen loved the old servant truly, and encouraged her to open her heart to her, and tell her all the troubles which were wearing out her strength in her daily life. The poor creature is often very weary. There are moments when she, like the best of us, was tempted to give way even under the Saviour's yoke, and to write, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity," even upon holy things. She had never ceased to devote herself, body and soul, to the good of others, but there had been moments when even her heart had failed within her, and she had been tempted to ask in discouragement of soul, "of what use it all was."

It was one of these moments now. In gentle tones Helen sought to comfort her old friend. She

reminded her of the happiness that would be hers one day when Jesus Himself would say to her, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." She begged her to remember that do all we may, we still lag far, far behind the steps of the Saviour, whom we are striving to follow in the road of suffering and self-sacrifice. She represented to her that she would never have cause to regret having devoted herself to others, either in this world or the next. Those whom she had served so faithfully would always love her in return, and be ready to do anything for her. All would come to her as to their best friend. All would love her, all bless her.

Soon Helen perceived that Gertrude was smiling. The old woman was fully persuaded of the truth of all this. It was more for the sake of argument, and of being contradicted by Helen, that she continued to talk in the same strain.

"Oh! every one must take care of themselves when they get old, and are of no more use."

Then the truth came out. The fact was, that Gertrude had so completely identified herself in heart and soul with those whom she had served and tended for nearly twenty years, that she had quite broken down, since Death once more made the house desolate.

"Do you know, Miss," said the good woman a few minutes later, in a more cheerful tone, as she sipped her tea, "that I am going travelling for the first time. It has been settled to-day. I am fifty-five now, and I have never travelled except when I came here from my old home in Rochelle, with master and mistress when they were young, and I was not very old myself. I left my country to come here with Mrs. Clavel when she married, and I have never stirred since."

"And where are you going now?" asked Miss Wilmore. "Lucy has not said anything to me about this great undertaking."

"Because she does not know anything about it," replied Gertrude, "she is sad enough already, poor child, without our making her worse sooner than necessary, by telling her that the house is going to be left still more empty. But I know her well enough to be quite sure that if she had her choice, either to come with us, or to stay and keep her papa company here, she would instantly choose to stay."

"Then you are going away with Minna?" said Helen.

"That's it," replied the old servant, "and what's more, it was my own idea. If any good comes of it, I shall be thankful. Ever since the consultation

with the Strasbourg doctor, it has seemed as if there was nothing more to be done, nothing we could try for the poor child. After our darling's death, for months Minna thought and could speak of nothing She really took no interest in anybut him. thing; but lately a change has come over her. She seems to long to rouse herself, to be of some use to those who are left to her. She wants to help Miss Lucy in her studies, to interest herself in baby who is growing cleverer every day, and to be a good daughter to her poor father, who any one can see is wearing out fast. But she is not fit for anything, it breaks my heart to hear her talking over her plans, because I can see plainly enough that all the while she is growing weaker and weaker, and more and more ill. I have just told Mr. Clavel that there is no use in throwing the handle after the axe. Even if we can't cure her illness, there's no good in letting her make herself worse. Besides, I know that Miss Minna herself has not given up hope yet, and I believe it would cheer her immensely if we were to try some new treatment."

"And where do you think of going?" asked Helen.

"Mr. Clavel wrote at once to Strasbourg, and he had the doctor's answer to-day. He advises Miss Minna's going to a cold water establishment in Switzerland, and says it cannot do her any harm, and may possibly strengthen her; and when any one is growing weaker, as she evidently is, the disease is sure to gain ground. Mr. Vincent has promised to take us there himself; they say it's a beautiful place, the grounds slope right down to the edge of the lake, and one can see all the steamers passing. Only think what an amusement that will be for Miss Minna. It will be enough to do her good in itself. We are to go about the end of April, and if it agrees with her, we shall most likely stay three months."

"I think it is a very good plan, but what will Lucy do?" said Helen.

"Poor little darling," replied Gertrude, "I wish we could take her with us, and her papa would like to send her, but it would cost too much, and moreover, it would kill master to be left here quite alone."

"Lucy would never consent to leave him, I am sure," said Miss Wilmore; "well, it will be her turn to go one day, and meanwhile I will do all I can to cheer her; we will take famous walks, and go into the woods with baby."

Gertrude's hand trembled as she raised the cup of tea to her lips. She had not said a word about her own feelings in this matter, or what it would cost her to leave the house, and all her old ways and habits, and let somebody else look after the darling baby, and the beloved master who had gone through so much. Besides, at Gertrude's age, the thought of a move is never very agreeable. A devoted old servant like her could not be expected to believe that things would go on well without her, or that another could do her work.

"Mr. Frénois is to come for the holidays," she continued, and bring Master Richard with him. He is soon going to pass his examination as Master of Arts, whatever that may be, and then he will come here for a rest."

"It won't be much rest," said Helen, "every one will be wanting him. He is so much loved. I never go into a cottage without the people asking about him, and begging to know what news has been heard of him."

"That's true," said Gertrude, "and now he is going to be made a great professor, and will be teaching all over France perhaps."

"I don't think he means to take up teaching," said Miss Wilmore; "he wishes to serve God more directly, and to make the preaching of the Gospel his one vocation. He intended to begin his theological studies next autumn."

"But," said Gertrude, "Mr. Frénois is much too

good to let his mother go on killing herself with work."

"That is quite certain," replied Helen, "and so he is going to give lessons immediately. As he has taken the highest honours, every one at Strasbourg knows him, and he will have as many pupils as he likes to take, and be handsomely paid. Arnold Frénois would think himself wanting in the very first of duties, if he did not make it his chief earthly object to save his mother from all exertion and care in the future. His greatest desire is to make her declining years a time of entire rest and peace."

"Mrs. Frénois will most probably join us at the baths during the holidays," continued Gertrude; "she is anything but strong, and Mr. Arnold says it will do her good. I dare say too he thinks it will be good for Miss Minna also, who certainly won't find all the company she needs in an old thing like me."

"Now, Gertrude," said Helen, "you know we should none of us ever grow tired of being with you, and Minna will like to be able to talk to you of the past."

"Recollections of the past are painful, Miss Helen, and when we think of all our happy days, our family parties, our holidays and picnics, it brings back the remembrance of all that has happened since, and then"

"And then, one does not dare to think of what may come next," said Helen, sadly.

"No, Miss Helen, one does not; we have had so much trouble in the past, it makes us dread the future. If baby has a little feverish attack, I make up my mind at once that she is going to die, and that the good God means to take her too. Folks say that when babies are born as she was, their mother is always calling for them. And as for Minna, we know there can be no happiness for her, ever. She must just languish and pine away. God may give some of his sunshine to the younger ones, and it's to be hoped they will make the old place bright again one day; but then I suppose they will go off to homes of their own, and as for me, nothing would ever make me go with them. My place will always be with the one who will always stay behind, poor crippled darling. She will never have a home of her own, or the protection which she needs more than any of the others, and when her father is taken, and her old nurse gone, if her life is still spared well, I don't like to think about it."

And Gertrude remained with her hands clasped together on her knees, and her eyes fixed upon the wall, as though through her tears she could see there the sad sketch of the future which her imagination pictured.

Helen was thinking also, leaning her head on her hand; she was trying to imagine what her own future might be, and was asking herself whether it would be right for her to encourage the faithful old servant's hope, that she would always remain with her dear invalid, and nurse and cherish her. She had guessed rightly the thoughts that had been passing in Gertrude's mind.

"You won't be going away from Tournèges, Miss Helen?" asked Gertrude, at length.

Helen held out her hand to her without speaking.

"It was God himself who brought you here," said Gertrude—"I am sure of that—and now we shall never be able to do without you."

"I must always go where God leads me," said Helen, much overcome, "wherever that may be; I have truly found a second home here."

"And you have no friends anywhere else?" asked Gertrude, anxiously.

"I do not know," said Helen, with still more emotion, "but I know you all love me here. I am sure you do, and Minna, and my sweet Lucy, and our darling baby. I know you would all be sorry to see me go away."

"You! go away!" exclaimed Gertrude, "oh!

Miss Helen, things are bad enough as they are without that."

And casting down her eyes on the small white hand, which still held hers, they rested on a gold ring that encircled one of the fingers. She had remarked the ring many times before, but until now it had never aroused any suspicion in her mind. And even if it had, she would have thought any allusion to it to be quite as cruel as it would have been impertinent. Had a little feminine curiosity arisen in her mind, the secret question provoked by it would never have passed her lips. . All in Helen's past seemed to be dead and buried, and all that remained of it were the results that it had produced in a holy life, entirely consecrated to the service of others. But now Gertrude felt as though she could not refrain from speaking. The fear and the doubt that were suddenly aroused in her mind struggled powerfully within her. Simple and frank by nature, she could not get at what she longed to know in any roundabout way. Indeed, it would never have come into her head to make any attempt to do so.

"Miss Helen," she said, "is that your mother's wedding-ring that you wear on that finger?"

Helen did not change colour.

"No," she replied, simply, "it was my engage-

ment ring. It was given me by him to whom I was to have been married. He did not wish to take it back, and I have not taken it off my hand for more than two years. He has kept mine also, yet there is nothing between us now . . . I have suffered in many ways, my good Gertrude," she continued, "and when all else failed me, I had to give up also the only friend on whom I could have leaned."

"But it was not he who gave me up, Gertrude," she continued, in a trembling voice, as she saw the old woman's look of compassion; "I made him go away. It was right that it should be so, and now I do not even know where he is. If I were sure that I should never see him again, I could promise you, Gertrude, that I would never leave you. But I know nothing; all I am sure of is that if he is alive, he still loves me. And if he were to come from beyond the sea to claim me, I would go with him. I know that his heart was broken and his life blighted through me. We parted without hope; we made no promises. There seemed no prospect of our ever being able to marry, but I think he felt as I did that henceforth each would lead a solitary life. And I trust that God has been as great a support to him as He has been to me."

"You never hear of him?" asked Gertrude, deeply interested, "you do not know where he is?"

"I will tell you my story in a very few words, Gertrude," she replied. "You know that after the death of my parents, I was left alone with my brother. He loved study, travelling, and an independent life. He was perfectly satisfied with my companionship and cared little for society; he made me promise that I would never leave him, his health was very delicate, and my one desire was to take care of him and minister to his comfort. gave the promise; he did not know what he was requiring of me, and it never came into my mind that I might one day regret it. Edward Morris often came to see us; he was my brother's greatest friend, and sometimes he paid us long visits. We became much attached to each other. I was taking myself severely to task for the way in which I began to miss him when he left, and to feel frightened at the blank which his absence made, when I received a letter from him. He confided to me his dreams of future happiness, and said that it depended on me whether they should be realized. He knew nothing of the promise which bound me to my brother. I know he was awaiting my answer with joyful hope, for he alluded to the kindly welcome with which I had always received him, and the regret

which I had not hesitated to express when he left. When this letter reached me, my brother was very poorly, his health seemed breaking down. He was in very low spirits. I was afraid that he fancied I cared less for him than formerly. I feared that if his strength gave way, it would be my fault In short, Gertrude, I summoned courage to tell Edward that I could not marry him. My brother never suspected anything. He used sometimes to wonder why his friend had left off coming to stay with us. I encouraged him to travel constantly, it was good for him and far better for me, than remaining in a place so full of associations. My brother died two years afterwards. I was sitting in his room one day, arranging his books and papers, with a broken heart and many tears, when some one came It was Edward. He stayed some hours, and when he left, we were engaged. Henceforth, we thought, nothing could separate us.

"But," and Helen's voice again trembled, "a short time only passed before I heard of all my fortune being lost. Nothing remained of all that had belonged to my brother, I was reduced to destitution. Edward had just lost his father, his patrimony was very small, and his aged mother and two sisters depended entirely upon him. Again we were called upon to sacrifice our affection for each other, what-

ever it might cost. I wrote to him, and I have never seen him since; but I am sure he has suffered quite as much as I have."

Old Gertrude had listened with breathless interest. Her eyes were full of tears.

"And it all ended there?" she said.

Helen rose, opened one of the drawers of her bureau, and taking out a miniature she placed it before Gertrude. The old woman dried her eyes that she might examine it.

"Oh what a handsome face!" she exclaimed, "what a beautiful couple you would have been."

Helen could not restrain a smile in the midst of her sadness.

"It is rather like Mr. Arnold," Gertrude continued, "something about the upper part of the face, the eyes and forehead."

"Yes," said Helen, "Mr. Frénois has often reminded me of him."

"And you have parted for ever?" asked Gertrude.

"For as long as God chooses, dear Gertrude; many months have passed since then. Our strength lies in perfect obedience to God's will, and in seeking faithfully to fulfil the duties He gives us to do. Life is always beautiful when it is given to God; and Edward has devoted his truly to Him."

"You hear of him?" asked Gertrude.

"No, but I am sure he is working for God; I know he is doing good, spending his life in fulfilling the holy duties in which he finds his greatest consolation."

"But you have not ceased to hope?" asked the sympathizing listener.

Helen's pale face flushed crimson.

"Not quite, perhaps," she said. "But we should have to wait so long. It seems sometimes as if we should scarcely know the fair young dreams of our youth, if they were to come back to us in our declining years. We should be so weary then."

"Still," she added, as though speaking now to herself, "it would be great, great joy to be together at last, to be able to tell each other all that we have suffered, and how faithfully we have loved one another. Yes, it would be delightful to feel that we had always belonged to each other, and that God had only separated us for a time to teach us to love Him first of all, and best of all. May His name be praised for everything."

" Amen," said Gertrude.

"But," she added, slily enough, "I shall set to work to watch the postman. And may God send you something good soon—before you are quite too old and too weary to be able to enjoy it." "I have done with dreams, dear Gertrude," said Helen, gravely, "I shall never leave the Vosges."

"I am sure I should have said so a year ago, when you first came to us," replied Gertrude, "you looked so delicate, you did not seem to have a year's life left in you. But you have become quite a mountaineer since then. And to-night, upon my word, you look younger than our poor Miss Minna. And now I must go. It is past midnight. I must be off and leave you to sleep. You are pretty sure to sleep well after your talk to me. It's only mothers, or those who feel like mothers, that young folks can pour out their hearts to. And nobody minds what they say to an old nurse like me. You may talk to her, and confide secrets to her as safely as you would to an old log of wood."

"Oh, Gertrude!" said Helen; "there, that is to punish you." And she rose and kissed Gertrude on both cheeks.

"God bless you," said the old woman, as she hunted for her umbrella to hide her emotion. "God bless you—sleep well. Every one in this place loves you and blesses you, and it will not be a happy day for *them* when some one comes and carries you off."

A very short time afterwards Helen fell asleep with the sweetest of smiles upon her face. In her

dreams Edward Morris came to seek her. The next day things looked gloomy. Her little room was solitary. Her life was one round of continual daily duties towards friends too much absorbed in their own cares, or too discreet to make much inquiry into hers. Still the conversation with Gertrude had done her good. Since she had opened her heart to the old woman, the hope which she scarcely dared to cherish seemed to her a more lawful one. She felt nearer to him who she knew was still loving her, and who was waiting patiently far, far away, in one of the most northern counties of Scotland.

CONCLUSION.

SIX YEARS LATER.

A Few Leaves from Minna's Journal.

December 25th, Christmas Day.—To-day, after morning service, Arnold Frénois was ordained. went to church for the first time. Mr. Vincent took me, propped up with pillows, in his little carriage. It hurt me very much, I was afraid at first that I should faint away, the pain had tired me so dreadfully. But I got better afterwards, and before I had been long in church, I had forgotten everything except what was going on around me. The service was so beautiful and so touching that it absorbed me entirely. Now that I have succeeded in going once, without being really the worse for it, I mean to try and go every Sunday. I am sure it will please dear papa, though he has never liked to ask me to do it. I dreaded so much the idea of people looking at I never could stand being pitied, and feared they would stare at me with curiosity, or look compassionately at me. But to-day all eyes were fixed on Arnold. His confession of faith was something beautiful. It was so simple and so humble, one would almost have said that it was a child speaking, until the time came for him to declare his intention of devoting his whole life to God. Then all his manly energy seemed thrown into the fervour with which he declared, in tones of positive rapture, that it was his one longing and ardent desire to consecrate himself, body and soul, to the service of his Saviour, and to lay his youth and his strength, with love and joy and gratitude, at His feet. Everybody was in tears. I wept passionately at Gertrude's side.

Several pastors had come from Strasbourg to be present at the ceremony. Many of them were elderly men, and had been Arnold's masters at the Theological College. One of them pronounced the last prayer, whilst all laid their hands on Arnold's head, as he knelt before them. At that moment, I was carried far away from all my own troubles and struggles. I felt raised above all earthly heights, to the region where the whole soul goes up to God in burning love. Ah! I understood then how it was that Arnold could go where he was called, and give up everything for the service of his Saviour. I felt quite willing to let our dear little Lucy go with him, since he has chosen her for his companion. Oh! how happy she is! And I must stay here! oh, my God!

December 26th.—I ended my Christmas day very sadly. One moment I was feeling victorious, and could really rejoice in the love of Jesus, which seemed to me worth more than the whole world, and the next moment I fell again. Then life seemed to me a prison; and I felt as if I had been hardly dealt with.

But oh! what did not Christ give up, when He came to live with us on earth! He did not choose to enjoy any of earth's pleasures. He took upon Himself our suffering and our curse, by his own free choice. Oh! is it not better to let Him choose for me also? May his will be done, not mine; for He loves my soul better than I love it myself. I should have stained and soiled it in this world. I should perhaps have lost it, even, for the world had such a hold on me. Dreams of earthly pleasure and glory had such a fascination for me; they held me down to earth. God has saved me, by forcing me to raise my eyes above, and fix them on Himself alone. And now He gives me his own joys. In this life of mine, which is so despoiled of earth's fairest and most natural delights, He gives me, in his love, the consolations and the joys of which Jesus was deprived, for our sakes, when He hung upon the cross, abandoned by all in His agony.

January 28th.—The house appears very sad and

empty. Yet Lucy is still with us. What will it be like when she is gone? I think she was ashamed to cry when Arnold left us to-day, for six weeks. smiled through her tears, and ended by throwing herself into my arms, and hiding her pretty face on my neck. How fond every one is of her! Since Charlie's death, we have all doated upon her. Arnold watched over her as though he had been her elder They soon became everything to each other. It has been quite a charming little story. think I have played my part in it too, though I have been laid aside by illness. He could not help loving her, precious little sister that she has been to all of us; always setting aside her own wishes, and trying to prepare little surprises and pleasures for every The way in which she always forgets one else. herself, and lives only for others, strikes every one who sees her. She is happy or sad as others are, so full of sympathy is her nature. Our little hidden mountain flower only thinks of the sunshine or the showers of the day. I believe no one but herself was surprised when some one took notice of her, and sought to steal from us our precious jewel.

Later, same day.—Gertrude, at my request, brought me the box in which our mother's weddingdress has always been kept. I remember hearing dear mamma say, one day, when she was looking at it with Gertrude, that she was keeping it for me. I tried the dress on Lucy. It is a lovely embroidered muslin, and we are going to alter it for her. Lucy was quite overcome, and left it to me to settle everything. Then she kissed Gertrude and me, over and over again. I forgot all my troubles once more, in trying to act a mother's part towards her. Our little bride is so pretty, with her fair locks plaited into a golden crown around her head; her eyes beaming with a joyous, yet tender happiness; and her face like an April day, all smiles and tears. To my mind, she is the beau ideal of the young girl that is needed in a house like this, which has no brightness but what she brings into it. It is no wonder that we watch her long and lovingly. Her dear face will so soon be beyond our sight.

February 2nd.—We have arranged our daily life as though it were going to last. Lucy writes her letter in the morning, whilst I am teaching little Marie. Then when the child's lesson is over, and I send her away, she goes out walking, or for a run in the garden with Lucy; and I can hear them from my room, romping and laughing. I always spend the hour that they are out, quietly in my own room. It is my time for prayer, and for studying my Bible, and gathering strength for the conflict which begins

afresh every day. This morning hour brings its own joys and compensations. Thank God, I shall still have these, even when the house is yet emptier than it will be soon—even when baby perhaps will be gone too. God's love and brightness will still remain. And when I am quite, quite submissive, and quite worn out, and the journey is over, He will take me to Himself, and then I shall understand it all. I am one of the blind ones, whom God is leading by a way that they know not. But when I reach heaven I shall understand better the love that has led me there; to the heavenly place in which all my dreams of happiness must centre.

In the afternoons, we all settle ourselves comfortably in the drawing-room, and chat. Lucy is very wise and most anxious to be economical, and to do everything for herself. She won't let me fatigue myself; but throws her arms round my neck, and gives me a hug, when I inspire her with a good idea. We always keep up a nice bright fire, to cheer us. The postman makes his appearance about four o'clock, after we have looked out of the window many times to see if he is coming. It is almost always baby who brings us the letter. She runs in, fresh from her play in the garden, with cheeks warmed into the brightest roses by the winter wind. She generally stays with me whilst Lucy runs off

upstairs with her treasure. By and by, she comes down again, and then papa comes in for the evening. Lucy reads aloud to us fragments of her letter, stopping every now and then, and blushing up to the roots of her fair hair, as she comes to the bits which tell her, over and over again, how much she is loved, which she does not choose to read to us. How strange it all seems! She loves us so dearly; her very heart is bound up in us; and yet she is willing to go away with Arnold to the end of the world. She is going gladly. Her courage has never seemed to fail her for a moment. No doubt she will shed many tears—it will be a great trial to her, and she will feel for us in our grief; yet she is willing to go. wonder whether she thinks it quite natural that I should stay at home, without any future to look forward to; or whether she is feeling truly sorry for me, when she looks at me so tenderly, with the tears shining in her eyes. I wonder whether it seems to her, sometimes, that my fate is rather a hard one; and that I must have suffered a good deal.

March 17th.—To-day, after reading her letter, Lucy threw herself into papa's arms. "Arnold is coming to-morrow," she said, sobbing. "Well, and is not that good news?" said papa, as he pressed her tenderly to his heart, and tried to smile. She hid her head for a long time on his shoulder; then raising it, she said, in such a low voice that I only just caught the words, "It will be so soon, so soon."

Gertrude came in just then, carrying carefully on her arm the wedding-dress. It had been beautifully done up, and looked like new in its snowy whiteness. Our dear old nurse is like the rest of us just now; she takes it by turns to be sad and gay. Just at this moment, she was looking only on the bright side of this event, which is both a sorrow and joy to us all.

"I think, sir," she said, "our Lucy will look pretty in this. We shall eat her up with our eyes. It is a pity we can only keep her in it one day."

But Lucy could not smile, as she looked at her gauzy white dress. She stole round to me.

"Oh, Minna," she said, as she knelt down by my sofa; "Arnold is coming to take me away—at once. Look at the letter which he has enclosed for us to see. It explains all."

I took from her hand a crumpled paper, on which a few lines were written. They were evidently traced by the hand of a peasant; and there was no attempt at spelling properly. I read aloud—

"To Mr. Arnold Frenois.

"REVEREND SIR,—My comrade, Max Croner, has asked me to write to you, to tell you that he is laid

up in the hospital, with a bad fever. He says he knows he shall die. He seems quite willing to go; but he wants so much to see you once more. Since it is settled for you to come out here as our missionary, he wants you to come by the next boat, if you possibly can. Max says he has things on his heart which he can say to no one but you. He says no one else would be able to understand him or speak to him. If you bring your lady with you, tell her she need not be afraid of us soldiers. We will give her the best welcome we can. The last thing Max did, was to arrange a little house for you, close to the fort; and we were all glad to help him at his work. We are often very dull in this place, and it is so pleasant to hear kind words.—Farewell, Reverend Sir, "John Libourg.

Sergeant in the 2nd regiment of Zouaves, at the Fort, in the Mountains of Kabylie."

I burst into tears as I pressed my dear little sister to my heart. And for the first time since the night we returned home, after mamma's death, I saw, when I raised my head, that papa was weeping also. He came towards us, placed his hand caressingly on Lucy's head, and drew her from my arms into his own.

"Go, my child; and God's blessing go with you.

We would not wish to keep you. Be brave and trustful. You will work for God there; we will work for Him here. And, hereafter, there will be a blessed re-union and a crown for all."

When he had sat down again in his large armchair, baby climbed on his knees, and laid her curly head on his breast. He kissed her tenderly. Then, looking kindly at me, he said—

"You see how much our Minna is needed here. Do not regret that you are not going to be a missionary also. But rather remember that you are a missionary—our own home missionary. The work is already begun. May God bless and preserve you, my beloved child, and give you grace and strength to finish it."

If I ever regretted not being able to walk, it was at that moment. I could not throw myself on his neck, as I longed to do, after these words of love and blessing. But he came to me, and I told him that I never wished to leave him—that I no longer regretted anything.

Is this true? Yes, in the depth of my heart I think it is. On the surface there are still sometimes troubled waters. But God will lay all these to rest one day.

March 25th.—The wind blows and whistles and finds its way into our very bones. I have a bad

cold, and am obliged to stay in my room, and nurse myself for the day. I must try and get well to go to church with them. Arnold and Lucy have gone to pay their farewell visits, They came to wish me good-bye, before they went out. How well they suit each other. They are both so bright-so singleminded—so full of happy, holy joy. They have given themselves to one another, that they may, together, consecrate themselves to God. Lucy dreads nothing. Her strength is the strength of a perfectly child-like, trusting heart; and she is filled with an earnest longing after entire consecration and selfsacrifice. Ever since the day when she placed on my feet the lovely couvre-pied she had made for me, at the cost of so much labour and self-denial. I have seen what direction her life would take, and in what she would find her happiness. And poor Max. He was the first who led Arnold to Africa. Will he be alive to welcome him?

April 7th.—Lucy wishes me very much to wear a white dress on the wedding day. But this I cannot do. I have told her that I should certainly catch cold. I wish to be looked upon quite as the elder sister. Does not Lucy need a mother at such a time as this! And yet, if dear mamma were here, the parting would be yet more sad; and she is spared a great deal of sorrow. I don't feel at all ill

now. I wonder if it would be less painful for me if I did not go to church.

Gertrude has been scolding me. She perceived that I burnt down my bed-room candle very quickly, and guessed that I kept it alight far into the night. She does not know what good it has often done me to pour out my heart in these quiet hours in earnest conflict and prayer, after days of weary repression. I confess all to Jesus. He forgives; He makes my way clear, and I fall asleep afterwards, and awake refreshed and strengthened in the morning.

The spring violets, and primroses, and hawthorn have come into blossom just in time to decorate the house. I made Lucy and little Marie go out and fetch whole baskets full, and some branches of ivy. Susan and Rose, the two eldest girls in the Sunday school, are helping to arrange all for to-morrow. To-morrow! Yes, it is to be to-morrow. A holiday in the morning, and bitter tears in the evening! The trunks are standing in the hall. The bride's trousseau is all packed, but one or two boxes are left open, and fresh things are continually arriving to be packed into them. Lucy fled from the confusion of her own room more than a week ago, and took shelter in Charlie's little attic. She and Arnold are not going to be cruel enough to leave us all at once. The 15th is the day fixed for them to sail from Marseilles. Arnold is to take his little wife to Strasbourg for two days. He wishes to show her the old house where he lived so long, and to go with her to his mother's grave.

Poor Arnold! he felt his mother's death dreadfully. He had so longed to see her enjoying a peaceful old age, and just as he was beginning to work for her, she failed and died. They would not be going abroad if she had lived. It was settled that they should have a pretty little home of their own at Strasbourg, and she should live with them; yet, though I love them so much, though to-night I long with all my heart to keep them with us, yet I think I am thankful that they are going away just at first. My courage fails sometimes, I am not old enough yet to be able to see all this happiness going on around me without feeling that nothing like it can ever, ever come to me!

We had a letter this morning from Helen Wilmore. I never can call her Helen Morris! She only writes a few lines, for she says she is tired, and much occupied with the care of her little Mary, who is delicate like her mother. She and her husband are true missionaries in a mining parish where he is beloved. Helen is intensely happy. Her trial was a long one; and if it had been God's will that it should have been still longer, that it should have

lasted all her life, she would have been patient and self-forgetful to the end. Now, notwithstanding her happiness, she is tired, and does not go into raptures as those do who have never suffered. leans upon him to whom she gave herself so long ago. When one is weak and ill, it must indeed be delicious to have some one to lean upon, never to feel utter loneliness of heart, to live in and for another. . . . Helen has sent Lucy a piece of English poetry which she has composed describing the time she spent with us. I am sure she will be with us in spirit to-morrow. If we could only have her presence also, how beautifully she would arrange the flowers. It is one o'clock, and I hear Gertrude about the house. She is almost bewildered with preparations-arranging clothes, making cakes, setting the house in order. . . . But here she comes to scold and kiss me!

April 8th.—I am feverish and could write all night. But no! all that has happened to-day is too near my heart. My head is all in a whirl and aches dreadfully. And yet it all went off so quietly and peacefully, only my heart seemed bursting. I shall never forget Lucy in her white dress, or how lovely she looked when Gertrude brought her into the drawing-room, and led her up to Arnold. Yet she looked, if possible, still more lovely when she

knelt beside him at the altar to receive our dear father's blessing, and with it, the blessing of the whole assembly. For we all seemed one family today. I fancy I can hear the village children now singing their hymn whilst Arnold and Lucy were still on their knees, with their hands joined. No one was at the house except the Vincents and the family from the Black Valley. Leonore Siberg put a mysterious letter into Arnold's hand. I saw that her own trembled as she did so, and I guessed rightly, that the letter contained her written pardon to the dying criminal, which she wished Arnold to carry to him. Little Lisette has grown so tall and pretty. Every one says she is the image of her father, but she looks sad, like a child who has been brought up in the midst of sorrow. Old Siberg is still alive.

And Lucy is gone! Nothing is left to me of my little sister but this white dress and veil, and this wreath which I keep close to me. I must take care of darling baby, who strutted about to-day like a maid-of-honour. They are to come back in three days for a last farewell—a last prayer. And then it will be all over!

Arnold himself carried me from the carriage to the church. He placed me just behind my sister, whose white veil was resting on my lap. He left her afterwards to come back and fetch me. He looked very pale, though very handsome, and I could see that he trembled a little. They were both of them so thoughtful and so attentive to me, and to dear papa too. Gertrude had the most magnificent shawl. . . It was quite a bride's shawl, she declared, or an old maid's. She was very proud of it, and chiefly as a proof of the affection of these two young hearts.

May 4th.—I awoke this morning as from a dream to gaze from my open window on the mountain now covered with verdure. The very air is scented with the perfumes of spring, and the little birds are pouring forth their joyful songs. I have been very ill. I can see how ill by my altered face, and by the care that they take of me. My poor father, after all his troubles and cares, has had to go through this fresh trial on my account, and Gertrude has had all this additional fatigue. And poor darling little baby! Lucy gone! every one occupied with me! constantly obliged to keep out of the way! how miserable the poor child must have been all this But I have got through my illness now! Not that I am well, but I am no worse than I was I have returned sufficiently to life to be able to fulfil my duties, and I have beautiful duties before me. Baby is my child, my little pupil; I will not let any one take her from me. I will teach her much more than I know myself. We will teach each other. And may God help me to show her the happiness which I was so slow to find. shall be my little messenger in the village. Between us we will have a home mission. In my own little room, after the day's duties, we will make plans for the next day, and be happy over our work. In the evening, papa will read aloud to us some of the books which make home so pleasant. family readings will be such a delight, that when the book is closed, we shall all be longing already for the next evening to come. I mean to get him to read "Ivanhoe," and "The Last of the Mohicans" over again. I can fancy how Marie's eyes will dance, and how earnestly she will beg to be allowed to sit up a little longer. The Vincents will often Richard will keep us alive with his come to us. frolics. When the evenings are fine and warm, we will sit out of doors, and watch the stars come out one by one, and talk of our absent ones, and the happy day when they will return—for we are sure they will return. When my father has worked on alone a little longer, he will send for his eldest son to come and help him. And Arnold has promised that he will respond to his call.

Papa has just been reading me the last letter from Africa. It came when I was ill. They arrived in time to see Max. He died a week afterwards. They found him in terrible distress of mind. Arnold was a messenger of peace and pardon to him for the second time. All poor Max's comrades loved him. He was a good, faithful, brave soldier. But he does not seem ever to have held up his head again.

And now I am very tired. My God, Thou knowest all that I desire to be and to do in this poor house. Give me at all times a feeling of perfect submission, and take unto Thyself my will, which no longer rebels against Thine. I do not yet understand why I should have been afflicted as I have been. I do not know now all that Thou doest. But I shall know hereafter, and then I shall adore Thee. I shall bless Thee; I am sure of it. I do it already, O my God!

LITTLE JOHNNIE.

CHAPTER I.

WHAT JOHNNIE HAD IN HIS POCKET.

MADAME LANGELLES had just put her little boy to bed. He was a dear little fellow of six years old. She tucked him up warmly, for it was winter, and the weather was cold. His little hands were clasped, just as they had been when he was saying his prayers. A few minutes afterwards he was sleeping quietly, breathing with the soft regularity which sounds so pleasantly in the ears of mothers.

Johnnie had had a tiring day, by which we mean that he had run about and played a great deal. Whilst he was sleeping off his fatigue, his mother folded up his clothes, holding them up to the light and looking through them as she did so, to see if anything wanted mending. The tiny trousers seemed wonderfully heavy. They were the first pair with pockets that he had ever possessed, and every one

knows what this is to a little boy. His mother would never forget the child's pride and pleasure on the first day he had put them on. It was on a Sunday. Some months had passed since then, but Madame Langelles remembered well the boy's dancing eyes, his exclamations of delight, and the manly strides he took up and down the room. Johnnie's hands were kept constantly busy, taking out his pocket-handkerchief and putting it in again, although he was not suffering from a cold in the head. The week following had seemed quite an age to Johnnie. His first question every morning had been regularly, "How many more days before Sunday?"

Little things, alas! often remind us of great ones, and sometimes very painfully. Just when we are least expecting it, some casual association will bring to us some cruel recollection, which strikes the heart with a sharp pang. The blouse and trousers which had replaced Johnnie's petticoats, and constituted his first suit of boy's clothes had been made of black cloth by pure chance. They were intended merely for Sunday, but before they were half worn out, alas! they had been taken into every-day use.

Johnnie's father, who had taken such pride in seeing his only child dressed as a little man, had

died only a few weeks afterwards. And ever since the day when the funeral procession had left the house, and Johnnie had walked behind the coffin with the mourners, his black suit had been worn alike on Sundays and weekdays. He had grown accustomed to them now, and the pockets were no longer a novelty.

This evening they were crammed unusually full, so full that they stuck out on each side of the tiny leg, and seemed as if they would burst. His mother was curious to see what treasures the little fellow had hoarded up in them. She made up her mind she would give him a little talking to next morning about cramming them so full, and tearing the cloth. It would not be a very severe one, for Madame Langelles was more given to weeping than to scolding.

There was a whole world of things in the pocket, besides the handkerchief. Amongst others, we may mention some magnificent marbles—great shining agates such as small boys delight in exchanging with their favourite playfellows, a knife with a broken blade, some little pictures all crumpled up, a nail, a flat piece of wood, and, quite at the very bottom of the pocket, buried in a heap of bread-crumbs, which grew deeper every day, a twopenny-piece, carefully wrapped in paper.

You may suppose, perhaps, that Johnnie's mother took immediate possession of all these treasures, or, at all events, that she took the liberty of making a choice between what was worth keeping and what She did nothing of the sort. was not. mother would have done so: for mothers know something of children's hearts, and never like to give them any needless grief. They know, besides, that the broken plaything, or the object which appears to them the most worthless of all, is often just the one most valued, and whose loss would cause the bitterest sorrow. So Madame Langelles guessed that the old worn-out knife was very likely her boy's special treasure; and she never dreamed of confiscating either that or any other of his innocent possessions during his sleep. She put every single thing carefully back in the pockets; and then she wasted a few moments, or rather, we would say, she spent a few moments in standing by the bedside watching her sleeping darling. He was a perfect picture of beauty in her motherly eyes, as he lay there so quietly with his rosy, innocent face, and the long, dark lashes shading his mischievous brown eyes.

They would wake up as merry and bright as ever to-morrow morning, as early as the canary, who was now fast asleep too, rolled up like a soft little yellow ball in his cage on the wardrobe. To-morrow Johnnie and his bird would fill the mournful house once more with life and mirth.

Next morning, the rain was beating against the window-panes, and Madame Langelles made up her mind that she should hear a volley of complaints as soon as Johnnie had finished his breakfast. Johnnie's chief delight in life was playing on the pavement outside the house, which was his only garden, and almost his only walk. It was but rarely that his mother had time to take him much further. But out in the street great transactions were carried on between him and his little companions. They confided to each other the wonderful treasures they had picked up, and sometimes exchanged presents. No doubt it was here that some big boy, whose word was not worth much, had given Johnnie the old knife in exchange for something that had excited his envy. Here, too, his beautiful agates had been given to him, perhaps by some boy whose heart was tender enough to be truly sorry for the little fellow, whose father was dead, and whose mother, who looked so pale and thin, was left alone to earn the daily bread for herself and her child.

But evidently yesterday had been a grand day with Johnnie, and this morning his one idea seemed to be to remain quietly indoors, and enjoy the treasures of which he had gained possession. He did not even go to the window to look at the weather. Nor did he once ask his mother the question which was usually constantly on his lips when he was imprisoned in the house, "When may I go out, mother?" As soon as he had finished his bowl of bread and milk, and said his morning prayer, he stole away into a corner of the room, and began to empty his pockets of their contents on the floor beside him.

Madame Langelles watched him all the time whilst busying herself about her household work. But after she had sat down to her embroidery, whilst her needle was employed in making delicate stitches, her mind became absorbed in the recollections of the past, which had become habitual to her during this sad winter. She had been married so short a time; she had been so happy during the few years that she had spent with him who had loved her so devotedly. Her husband had worked too hard during their In his desire to keep her in every married life. comfort, he would stay over hours in the office where he worked as a clerk, and often bring home bills and letters to copy which would occupy him half through the night. And he had done all this in order that she might have nothing to do except to mind her children, and to take them out walking in the square on fine days, and enjoy watching

their pretty ways. The year before, their little girl had been taken from them just as she had reached her second year, and was growing more bewitching every day. Still, though it had been a heavy trial, they had so much left to them in one another, and in Johnnie, that they could look forward to many years of long and increasing happiness. Now, the widow was left alone with her little son.

Johnnie was as happy as a king, and, as his mother had guessed, the old knife was his special glory and delight. He scraped his wood with it. He turned the grey horn handle into a hammer, and used it to drive the old nail into the wood. How little do we know of the visions that flit through the minds of children, as they sit quietly amusing themselves with the commonest playthings, or working with the roughest tools. Johnnie's first idea was to build a house or a ship, and when he was obliged to confess that he could not quite manage this, he contented himself with saying that it would be a table or a chair. He was not easily discouraged. The carpentering lasted a long time. Then it was time for the marbles. He rolled them all round the room, creeping after them to the serious injury of the poor trousers. But he was happy, and, after all, his mother thought this was the first consideration. When he was tired of crawling about after them, he

sat down and contemplated them. What questions arise in a little child's mind! He wished he could understand how all those beautiful colours got mixed up together. He wanted to know who had put the little red and green stones into the clear white bowl, and how they could possibly get them in.

Still he did not say a word. His father's death and his mother's constant grief had checked the exuberance of his spirits, and the child, who used to make the whole house musical with his prattling and his laughter, was scarcely ever heard now.

When he came to the pictures, however, he ran up to his mother, and put them on her lap. "Mother," he said, "you promised to explain them;" and he raised his rosy face to hers.

Madame Langelles was just finishing the work which she was to carry back to the shop that day. Her child's voice cheered her heart, which had been so heavy all the morning. She remembered that when Johnnie's Sunday-school teacher had given him these pictures on the previous Sunday, she had promised to tell him all about them. But an old friend had come that day, and stayed till evening, and she had had no time to do so.

Now she took him on her lap. It was a rare treat for Johnnie to be petted like this on a week day. Since his mother had been left alone to carn their daily bread, she had but little time to spend in this way. The child of the poor workwoman, the child of the widow especially, must early learn to go to sleep alone, to lie in his bed awake, to play alone, to think alone, and alone to turn over in his mind many ideas and questions which less busy mothers have time to answer and explain. Yet Johnnie had been quite spoiled, compared with many others.

"That," said Madame Langelles, as she smoothed out the first crumpled picture on Johnnie's lap—"that is the picture of two blind men, who asked the Lord Jesus to restore their sight."

"And that is the Lord Jesus," said Johnnie, putting his little finger on the head around which he saw the halo of glory.

He looked at it for a moment very gravely; then, with, the rapidity of a child, he put another picture on it.

"And what is that?"

"That is the picture of a little girl who is dead. And there is the Lord Jesus again, standing by her. The little girl's father has asked Him to come and bring her back to life. You see He is giving his hand to the child, and is helping her to rise from the bed. And you see the mother. How happy and surprised she looks."

Johnnie looked long at the picture this time.

- "Mother," he said, "did the Lord Jesus always do what people asked Him?"
- "Yes, Johnnie; when He was on earth He did. He never refused any one then," replied Madame Langelles, with a trembling voice. The child's questions began to trouble her. She guessed what was coming.
 - "Then He does not do it now, mother," he said.
 - "Why not, darling?" she asked.
- "Because, mother, I asked Him not to let Jennie or father die; and they are both dead."

Johnnie uttered the last words with wide-opened and startled eyes. Death is a mystery to most children; or it merely means "going to heaven." But Johnnie, young as he was, had witnessed death in all its terrible reality.

Madame Langelles hid her face in her child's hair.

What could she say to him—she who had been murmuring secretly all the morning at the remembrance of her many earnest prayers which had not been answered.

- "Here is another picture," said Johnnie, whose mind, happily, was soon distracted from the thought that had troubled it.
- "It is Jesus being crucified," said his mother.
 "That is the Lord Jesus, on the cross; and there is

his mother, the Virgin Mary, weeping at the foot of the cross."

"But, mother," exclaimed the child, "Jesus died Himself. He need not have died. He might have prevented Himself from dying."

A ray of heavenly light shone into the soul of the young widow.

"He chose to die," she said; "He did not wish to save Himself. He went as a lamb to the slaughter. And now He has gone up into heaven. He hears all our prayers. He is always willing to do us good."

"Then," pursued Johnnie, with the inflexible logic of a child; "then why did He not bring papa back to life?"

"He will bring him back one day, Johnnie. Not to live with us any more in this world. That would only be, you know, for him to be sick, and suffer, and die over again. Dear papa is very, very happy now. He has gone to live, for ever, in the lovely land beyond the sky. He is in heaven, with our dear Saviour, Jesus. He will not come back to us any more; but we shall go to him one day. There is a place kept in heaven, Johnnie, for you and me."

Madame Langelles was crying now; but very quietly. Comfort had found its way once more into her heart; and her tears did her good. She rose, put the child gently on the ground, and prepared to

pack up her work in a silk handkerchief. Johnnie, meanwhile, busying himself in putting back all his treasures into his pockets.

The weather had cleared, as early rain often does, about noon. The brilliant sunshine dancing on the window-panes, made the little yellow canary sing for joy.

"Would you like to come with me to the shop? it is quite fine now," said Madame Langelles to Johnnie.

"Oh, yes, yes!" he replied, beginning to jump about the room. He had been so long quiet, that his little legs felt quite stiff.

"But first," said his mother, "we must have our soup, and go and see how grandpapa is getting on."

When Johnnie had most religiously obeyed his mother, and disposed of two good basinsful of soup, his mother emptied into a large bowl every drop that had been left in the saucepan. Then she put on her bonnet and shawl, hung the silk handkerchief on her arm, and put on Johnnie's cap and cloak. When they were ready, she turned the key in the door, on the outside, put it into her pocket, and went upstairs to see "grandpapa." The canary ceased his song as soon as they were gone, for he was not fond of solitude.

CHAPTER II.

"GRANDPAPA."

"GRANDPAPA" was an old neighbour who lived in a small room in the fourth storey of the same house. Madame Langelles had two rooms on the ground - floor—a tolerably large bedroom and a tiny kitchen but they were rather dark and gloomy. The room in which Grandpapa lived, up four flights of stairs, though very small, and somewhat difficult of access, was very bright and cheerful. Grandpapa was no relation of Madame Langelles, but he was just like one. He always called little Johnnie his "intimate friend;" he had known him ever since his birth, and had half adopted him. As to Johnnie's mother, he always said he loved her exactly like a daughter. As he was an old bachelor, he could not be quite sure whether this was the case or not; anyhow, whether or no he was mistaken as to the precise nature and degree of his affection, it is quite certain

that he loved her very much, better than he loved any other living being.

Hippolyte Carnaud was an old pensioner. He had returned from his campaigns with a chronic rheumatism, and minus an arm. He was one of those old soldiers who may be seen in such numbers in Paris, many of whom live and die without any one taking much notice of them. Their histories are generally very similar. Most of them have left their own province when very young to serve in the army, and have never returned to it. If they have not married, or if death has taken their wives and children from them, what is left to them on earth? In the distant province where they were born, their very names have long since been forgotten; and in the great city where they have settled in their old age, they live as strangers, either without the opportunity or without the wish to form new friendships. So at last they sink into the grave without leaving a mourner to weep over them. Their graves are like many others that are dug daily without even one friend being found to weep beside them.

Since Hippolyte had been living in the quiet suburb of the "Ternes," he had, however, become quite rich in the affection and goodwill of the whole neighbourhood. Every evening, one or other of the men who lodged in the neighbouring houses would drop in and have a pipe and a chat with the kindhearted old man. They were, most of them, engaged during the day, in some of the large shops or banking-houses of Paris, and at night they would leave their own fireside to come and tell the old pensioner some of the news which he so greatly delighted to hear. Sometimes two or three of them would gather around him at once; and though the conversation generally began with friendly attempts, on their part, to cheer and amuse him, it frequently ended by their all being entertained by him, as they listened to his stories of his former campaigns.

In the day, little Johnnie spent a great deal of his time with him, and it had become a regular thing now for Madame Langelles to look after his housekeeping as diligently as she looked after her own.

Johnnie had not yet even begun to learn his letters. But he knew all about the battle of Wagram and could give a capital description of the retreat from Moscow. The old soldier was never afraid of wearying his little companion, with what others would have called an old man's mumblings. Moreover Hippolyte Carnaud was sufficiently well educated to be able to teach Johnnie a little, and his eye would flash with indignation if Madame Langelles spoke about sending him to school. He always

put a stop to the conversation immediately by saying, "Hasn't he got me?" which really meant "What do you think I should do without him?" "What is to become of me if you take away my little playfellow?" Meanwhile the first reading lesson was continually being put off till "to-morrow," and this to-morrow never came. The old man and the child had so much to talk about. The merest trifle would serve to remind the former of some incident or other connected with his military life, and Johnnie never wearied of the stories he had to tell him. At other times, the child would lead the conversation, and talk to his old friend for hours of the various games he carried on in the streets, and the many adventures that happened to him there. Yet it must not be supposed, for all this, that Johnnie ran any risk of becoming a little city Arab. There are streets and streets, pavements and pavements, and Madame Langelles knew perfectly what she was about, and who were her child's companions in these games. They were the little sons of the grocer, the baker, the greengrocer, and the two or three respectable porters, of the few respectable houses in the street. After Johnnie had been sitting quietly for some time with old Hippolyte, he generally stood in need of a good game of romps with his little playfellows.

Madame Langelles and Johnnie arrived at the old soldier's just at the right moment. Hippolyte was growing tired of his own company, and beginning to feel neglected.

"You have come to stay with me?" he said to the little fellow, as he patted his cheek. "I am going to tell you the story of the great battle, am I not?"

Johnnie did not answer. He did not like to disappoint his old friend; but he held his mother's hand yet more tightly.

"Father Hippolyte," said the widow, "Johnnie has not stirred out to-day. I am going to carry my work to the shop, and so I am taking him with me for a little walk."

"He hasn't stirred out all day? Then, why hasn't he been to see me? He would have been out of your way, and we might have begun lessons together."

"Oh! he has been so busy all the morning. He had his pockets full of all sorts of things, which have kept him well employed; and he has been playing so quietly by himself, that it would have been a great pity to disturb him."

"Well! one must kill time as one best may," murmured the old man, as he applied himself vigorously to his soup, changing his position continually in the vain attempt to make himself more comfortable in the wooden arm-chair, which hurt his rheumatic bones.

"Don't stay away an age," he exclaimed; "and try and bring me back a newspaper."

Meanwhile little Johnnie, finding that there was no longer any fear of his being left behind, had let go his mother's hand, and crept quietly to the old man's side. Taking the crumpled little pictures from his pocket, he placed them on the table.

"Look, grandpapa," he said; "I give you these for a present. Aren't they pretty? By and by, when I come back from my walk, I will tell you all about them."

"Thank you, my son," said the old pensioner, evidently touched by the little fellow's thoughtful attention.

The child was running away, when he called him back.

"Is that the way to go off?" he asked. "Don't you mean to give me a kiss?"

Johnnie threw his arms round the old man's neck, and gave him one of his best and longest hugs. Then, running after his mother, who was half-way down the steep stairs by this time, he put his little hand in hers, and set off at last in great glee for his walk through the gay and crowded streets of Paris.

The old man no longer felt solitary. The sweet pale face, and the dark, thoughtful eyes of the young widow had reminded him-as they often did-of a young girl whom he had secretly loved long, long ago. She had been just such another gentle, innocent creature, with a voice like Madame Langelles'always gentle, yet always cheerful; a smile full of mirth as well as gentleness; and a pair of large, dark eyes which were as thoughtful as they were tender. Hippolyte Carnaud had never spoken to Annette Dupont of the love he felt for her. He had nothing to offer her then but the warm heart and the strong arm, which he knew were not sufficient in themselves to maintain a wife and family. Annette was the village beauty. She had many admirers, and might make a good marriage, if he left her free, and did not interfere with her prospects by making love to her. Hippolyte was generous and unselfish. He loved Annette better than he loved himself. If he could only come home from his first glorious campaign, laden with decorations and honours, then, indeed, he would try and win her, for he would have something to offer her. But-with one arm gone, crippled, and almost useless-Hippolyte had not dared to think any more of Annette.

He did not return at all to his old home, but settled down upon his pension at Paris. Sometimes when he came across some one from his old village, he would inquire about former acquaintances, and about Annette—generally hers was the last name that rose to his lips. When he was told that she was prospering; that her husband was rising to be a better and better workman; that her home was filled with comfort, and she and her children were kept like ladies—he would say, and say truly, "I am glad to hear it. She was a good girl, and deserves it all." If a heavy sigh came after the words, it was not a sigh of envy; for, the next moment, Hippolyte would be thanking God in his heart for all the mercy He had shown him, and especially for Johnnie and his mother.

Oh! poor soldiers! Honour is a great thing, no doubt, but often it costs you very dear!

CHAPTER III.

JOHNNIES WALK.

GREATLY delighted was Johnnie, as he trotted along by his mother's side; taking two steps to her one, with an occasional little run, when he got out of time, or dragged behind.

Something kept tinkling in his pocket, at every step. No doubt it was the twopenny piece, which had got loose from the paper, and rattled against the old horn-handled knife. Johnnie had forgotten all about his money until now. He never would have made a plaything of it; and it had escaped his memory, amidst the many other possessions which had fallen to his share of late. But this walk with his mother through Paris brought his money to his mind. He saw so many pretty things which he would like to have, that his money now took the first place in his estimation, of all his worldly possessions.

He began to build all sorts of castles in the air;

with this little twopenny bit for their foundation. Almost at every shop they passed, Madame Langelles was called upon to answer the same question.

"Could you buy this for twopence? or could you buy that for twopence?" He began by imagining that he could buy a beautiful wooden horse; or a large india-rubber ball; or a pair of the pretty little boots that he saw hanging in the shoemaker's shopwindow.

But when he understood that these things were quite beyond his reach, he came back from fancy to reality. His mother told him that he could buy a cake with his money, or a handful of hot chestnuts, or a fine red apple; and Johnnie set himself to decide which of all these possible things it would be most advisable to choose. The consideration necessary before making such an important choice, absorbed him so completely, that he lost all power of speech. He did not even look at the shops, or the passersby; but allowed himself to be led along by his mother, like one in a dream.

"Who gave you your twopenny piece, Johnnie?" Madame Langelles asked, suddenly, just as they had passed the Madeleine, and had reached the stand of cabs, close by.

"Oh, mamma, don't you remember? It was papa."

Madame Langelles did not reply. A world of recollections rushed into her mind, with the child's words. The whole history of the twopenny piece came back to her suddenly. She stopped short in her walk, as though she had received some unexpected shock, and drew a long breath; and when she went on again it was more slowly than before.

Little Johnnie had been left at home with his father one day, when she had been obliged to go out, for the whole afternoon, on business. She had gone very unwillingly, for her husband was very ill that day; but the child had proved a first-rate little nurse. He had been as quiet and thoughtful as she could have been herself; and had even managed to raise his father's head, and give him a drink of cold water.

On Madame Langelles return, her husband had asked her to bring him a twopenny piece, saying—

"I want to give one to Johnnie, to buy something for himself."

After this, he had sighed deeply. Madame Langelles remembered that sigh well. There had been a world of meaning in it. "Who will gain money for them, in time to come?" it said. "Where will it come from when my young wife and my little son are left alone?"

So many things had passed since then! Even

Johnnie had forgotten his bit of money, and the things he intended to buy with it.

"Well, darling," said his mother, at length; coming back from the past into the present; "we must do what dear papa said; and you must buy something for yourself—anything you like."

Johnnie raised his innocent eyes to his mother's face.

"Can I buy a cake for myself, mother, and another for Lily?" he asked.

Madame Langelles could not restrain a smile.

"You wish to please yourself, and to please Lily too, Johnnie?"

He held down his little head; and a blush, half of shame and half of fun, suffused his pretty face.

"I see, Johnnie," said his mother kindly. "Well, yes, you can buy two little cakes for your money, or two red apples; only they won't be very big ones. Which would you like to have; we will buy them on our way back from 'the shop.'"

It was "the shop," par excellence, to Johnnie and his mother. For it was to this shop that the widow's work was always carried; and it was here that she received the money which enabled them to live.

This shop was a baby-linen warehouse on the Boulevard des Italiens.

It was filled with pretty things, most tempting to young mothers. The plate-glass window displayed a wonderful choice of long embroidered baby-robes, exquisitely-worked christening caps, tiny cachemire shoes richly worked in floss silk, and all sorts of pretty little costumes, capes, and cloaks for older children.

There was a long row of carriages standing before the large doors. It was early February, and though the weather was cold as winter to-day, there had already been some days sufficiently balmy to make young mothers think of the coming spring. For it is one of the chief pleasures of a young mother to scheme and plan how she may best dress up her pretty live dolls of children. Do they not delight in arranging the pretty little costumes which are to be as becoming as they are comfortable to the fascinating little creatures who are to be their companions in their walks and drives? Is it not one of their chief ambitions to secure for them the admiration and applause of the elegant crowd around them?

Ah, well is it for the poor mother who can look on such sights without one thought of envy, though the change of season is to bring no change of dress to her little ones; though the threadbare dress, faded by the summer sun, must be made to last through the winter, and be the only shelter from the bitter cold. Well is it for the poor mother who can look from the gaily, warmly-clothed children of the rich, to the ragged and thinly-clad little ones equally dear to her heart, and yet acknowledge that God, who is the Maker of all, is equally loving to the poor and to the rich. Well is it for her, especially if she can see and feel that the happiest and the best of all mothers is she who cares most for the souls of her darlings, and whose chief desire is to present them clothed in the righteousness of Jesus, and made glorious in his holiness before the throne of the great King of kings.

The pale workwoman in deep mourning passed with her child through the great doors and glided quietly down to the other end of the shop.

The work was taken from her and examined.

"This ought to be better done," said the "young lady," into whose hands the widow had given it.

She was an over-dressed girl, apparently about twenty years old, with a light flippant air which afforded a striking contrast to the dejected, thoughtful manner of the widow in her weeds beside her. She held the work in her hands, and examined it carelessly, with an attention which was evidently more than half divided with the gaily-dressed ladies in the shop beyond. Her remarks seemed made for

the express purpose of making herself appear a person of great importance.

"I am not accustomed to quite such fine embroidery," said the poor widow, her voice trembling as she spoke, "it is such very delicate work."

"I am sure I don't know whether I ought to give you any more," continued the girl in an offhand manner; "we often refuse workwomen whose embroidery is better than this."

"I hope you will try me again," said Madame Langelles.

Her heart was beating violently. She could not prevent her voice from betraying her emotion. A flush of indignation overspread her pale face. She could scarcely keep back her tears, as she forced herself to preserve a humble manner.

The young woman went off to another room, tossing her pretty head, and rustling the many furbelows of her flounced silk dress.

She returned in a few minutes with a piece of cambric and a pattern in her hand.

"Stop," she cried, "here are some little baby shirts, you may try again with these. If you can't manage to embroider them as neatly as the pattern, then we shall not be able to give you any more work. I have given you one to try with. Bring it back as soon as it is finished, and then I shall see whether we can give you any more."

And the little creature turned on her heel and went off. The widow stood still for a moment holding the work in her hand, but the girl never gave her another thought. Turning her back upon her, she went off as speedily as possible to a neighbouring counter to continue the gossiping chat with another young woman which Madame Langelles' inopportune entrance had interrupted.

Madame Langelles went to the desk to be paid for her work.

"Is this correct, miss?" asked the man at the desk, again interrupting the same girl by holding up the piece of paper which the widow presented to him.

"Yes, yes," said the girl, impatiently; "but she's not to have any more if she can't do it better."

The man paid the money very politely. Perhaps he had a mother, and respected the widow's weeds. Madame Langelles thanked him and retired from the shop.

Johnnie tried to pull her back at the door to look at a pretty Highland costume of plaid velvet in the window, which he said would just fit him. But his mother drew him forward almost roughly, and went away down the street at an unusually rapid pace, not stopping until both she and the child were out of breath. Then she halted suddenly. The fresh air had done her good, but her head was still burning hot.

"We haven't bought the cakes, mamma," said Johnnie, after a moment.

"No, darling, I had quite forgotten them, mamma was so unhappy. But it wasn't your fault, my darling," she added, seeing the sorrowful look that immediately overshadowed the child's face.

She squeezed his little hand lovingly in hers, and went on her way.

They soon came to a baker's shop. The odour that came from it was most delicious. There were all sorts of cakes and biscuits in the window. A young girl was arranging on the lowest shelf a fresh row of crisp, light-brown cakes, delicately powdered with snowy flour. A boy passed by them, and went in carrying a large tray laden with fresh treasures from the bake-house, hot rolls, sponge cakes, and currant buns. They followed him in, and the widow asked what her little boy could have for twopence. Two tempting penny cakes were put down on the counter before him. And after a little time spent in rummaging amongst the other things in his pocket, Johnnie succeeded in drawing out his twopenny-piece, and holding out his dimpled hand, presented

it himself to the comely-looking woman behind the counter. Johnnie was a very pretty boy. The woman might have had just such a boy of her own if her youngest child had lived. But he had died when he was a year old, and the pretty girl arranging the rolls in the window was her only child.

"Mamma has given you twopence to spend?" she said, by way of prolonging the conversation with her engaging little customer.

"No," he said, "papa gave me my money."

The woman's eyes fell on the widow's dress. She turned them away with a look, not of inquiry, but of sympathy.

"It was his father's last present to him," said Madame Langelles, calmly.

The woman put the cakes into his hand without another word, and they left the shop.

They had only gone a few steps when the young girl came running after them.

"Mother sends you these," she said, putting a brown paper parcel into the child's hand.

And before he had time even to thank her, she was gone.

A whole feast of cakes greeted the boy's eyes, as he peeped into the bag. "Oh, mother!" he exclaimed. "isn't she a kind woman?"

"Yes, darling," she cried, and drew him on.

She would go back and thank the woman another day. She could not do so now.

They went on to the grocer's, where Madame Langelles had some necessary purchases to make.

The grocer's wife, a stout, good-natured woman, with a red face, and a cheery voice, looked benevolently at Johnnie.

"How did you like your agates?" she asked.

Johnnie took one out of his pocket and showed it to her.

"They are beautiful," he said.

"Ah! I see who it is that spoils my little man," said Madame Langelles.

"He earned them for himself," said the woman. He stayed with me yesterday for more than an hour, helping me to pick up a sack full of chesnuts that a good-for-nothing boy had upset on purpose. Your little fellow is very obliging, Madame Langelles, and knows how to behave himself, so there's no need of thanks. Here, Johnnie, hold out your hand, and see if you can find room for these in your pockets—they iscem pretty well loaded."

And she held out a handful of nuts and dried pippins, which Madame Langelles had to find room for in her own pocket.

She thought no more of the pert girl at the baby warehouse. Her heart was warmed and cheered again, and she set off home with a light step, the nuts rattling in her pocket, and Johnnie running by her side, but no longer holding her hand. He required both his hands to hold the precious brown paper parcel.

When they came to the house he stopped at the lodge to share his cakes with Lily.

Lily was the porter's only daughter. She was five years old, but could not yet walk. It seemed probable that she never would walk; she had been put out to nurse, and had been either neglected or badly treated. Her legs had no strength in them. Her spine was injured, and she was obliged to be propped up in a little chair in a corner of the dark lodge, where she spent her days. The sun never shone there, for the room opened on one side into a dark alley, and on the other into a little damp court.

Lily would have had a dreary life of it, if it had not been for Johnnie. He was her sunshine and her strength. What she longed to do, Johnnie did for her. Where she wanted to go, Johnnie took her, pushing her little chair, with all his might, from one end of the room to the other. Johnnie was always ready to part with any of his treasures to Lily. He was constantly inventing some new game wherewith to amuse her. Consequently, this had been a dreary day to Lily. She saw her little friend go out of the

door with a sorrowful heart. And when more than two hours passed without his coming back, she grew so low-spirited, that her mother did not know what to do to comfort her. Busy as she was, she laid aside her work to take her little daughter on her lap, but Lily was so cross that she failed in every attempt to amuse her. At length, just as she was giving up the effort in despair, Johnnie's rosy face appeared behind the glass door.

After he had gone again, Lily's mother had no more trouble, for the little girl was quite happy all the evening, playing with some beautiful new agates. She had cakes for her supper, and a little store remained for to-morrow morning's breakfast.

Meanwhile, Johnnie, with a very happy face, rejoined his mother upstairs, after his quarter of an hour's visit to his friend.

CHAPTER IV.

SURPRISES.

MADAME LANGELLES was lighting a fire in the small iron stove when Johnnie came in, and the little fellow knew that there would be something good for supper. His mother's face was quiet and happy. All the unkind words, that made her widowhood heavier and her trials harder, were forgotten now.

"Here, darling," she said, as the boy ran in; "I want you to go up to grandpapa's at once; and, when the supper is ready, I will bring it up there. I am sure he will be glad to have us, for we have left him alone all day. Stop! take the newspaper that we bought for him."

"And will you put my cakes, and the apples and nuts, in a dish by themselves, mamma?" he asked. "I want to give them to him myself."

Madame Langelles promised, and the boy went off, climbing the steep stairs rather slowly, for his little legs were tired. Contrary to his usual custom, old Hippolyte had not lighted the little lamp which kept him company in the evening. His fire had gone out, and he was lying back in his arm-chair more than half asleep. It required some effort on the boy's part before he could succeed in rousing him; and then it was some time before he understood where he was, and who had come to see him. The poor old man had been completely overcome by weariness.

At last he was thoroughly aroused, and between them they had soon lighted the lamp and the fire, and made the room bright again. Then Johnnie climbed up the wooden chair, and established himself on the old man's knee.

"Well, little chap," he said, "and have you had a happy day?"

"Oh! yes, grandpapa; such a day!"

And Johnnie gave his friend a long account of all that had happened to him. Nothing was forgotten. The cake-woman and the grocer's wife were, of course, the most prominent figures in the picture which he drew for his old friend's benefit.

"But do you know, grandpapa," he added, twisting one of the horn buttons on Hippolyte's coat with his little fingers, "it hasn't been quite a happy day to mamma. They were rude to her at the shop. They nearly made her cry."

The old man gave a start in his chair which very nearly sent little Johnnie off his knees.

"Who was rude to her?" he asked. "Who nearly made her cry?"

The child had never heard him speak in such a tone before.

"Tell me about it," the old man added less violently, perceiving that he had frightened the boy. "Tell me all about it, Johnnie."

"It's quite true, grandpapa," he said, gravely. "The shopwoman was very rude to her. Mamma did cry after we had come away from the shop; but she did not mind afterwards. She got happy again very soon. The shopwoman told her she did her work very badly. But that isn't true; is it, grandpapa? Mamma never does anything badly, does she?"

"Never," replied the old man. "She does everything well—everything."

"She shall never enter that shop again!" he murmured between his teeth.

"Oh! I'm so glad!" exclaimed Johnnie. "You won't let her go there any more, grandpapa?"

"I won't," said Hippolyte, firmly.

All the "soldier" seemed revived in him. He put the child down upon the floor, and walked up to the wardrobe with quite a military air. Opening the

top drawer, he began to hunt for something which it took some time to find.

"Didn't you say she was going to bring the supper up here?" he asked, at length.

"Yes, grandpapa. But I mustn't tell you what we are going to have for supper. It's a secret."

And he whispered, in a lower tone-

"She's going to bring some soup for everybody, and something good besides. . . . You'll see what."

"Well, Johnnie, we'll get something ready to surprise her too. Wait a minute."

And mysterious preparations were carried on, between the old man and the child, during the next quarter of an hour.

Still the supper did not come. So when all was ready, they returned to their former position, in the great arm-chair by the fire.

"And you never brought me a cake, like Lily?" said Hippolyte, gently pinching Johnnie's little rosy ear.

"Oh, you are a grown-up man, you know," he replied.

"But grown-up people like nice things, Johnnie."

"Well, grandpapa, I'm going to give you something."

And Johnnie fumbled in his pockets, meditating

which of his gifts he should bestow upon his old friend; who watched him, meanwhile, with a sly look.

"You must be sure and give me what you like best," he said.

The old knife appeared; but Johnnie could not make up his mind, all at once, to part from it.

"Let's see that, Johnnie," said the old man; "that's just what I want to clean my pipe with."

It was a little hard, certainly; but Johnnie put the knife slowly into the old man's hand.

Hippolyte was a good deal touched.

"Now it's my turn to give you something, Johnnie; and I will give you what I value most. That's what real friends always do."

He got up to hunt for something in the deep pocket of his old military frock-coat, and brought out at last another old knife. It also had a horn handle, worn black by constant use; but it had a whole blade—a good blade that would cut.

Johnnie saw the difference quickly enough.

"Oh!" he exclaimed; "it's a real knife."

"A real knife." There was a world of meaning in the words. To give him a real knife, was to treat him like a big boy. And oh! the glory of producing it amongst the crowd of *little* boys who are making believe to play with knives that can't cut.

"Well, do you want it?" asked the old soldier.
Johnnie's dancing eyes were quite answer enough.
Old Hippolyte continued, in almost a solemn tone—

"When I first set off as a young soldier to the wars, Johnnie, my mother put this knife into my knapsack. She had been crying nearly all day. She wanted to give me more things than I could carry with me; and I was almost vexed with her. I never saw my mother again; but I have taken good care of my knife ever since. Now I am going to give it to you, Johnnie, because,"—he added, in a trembling voice—"because you are my best friend."

A deep growl from the old dog, stretched at full length before the fire-place, seemed to protest against this assertion.

"Oh, you don't think so, do you, Mr. Castor," said the old pensioner. "Well; you've been a faithful friend, I confess; but I don't think we should have had a very gay life of it, if we had been left to ourselves. You manage to go to sleep the best part of the day. I'm afraid, too, there is not much chance of your keeping your old master company much longer."

Johnnie could not understand all that was said to him; but he felt that there was a good deal implied in this present of the old knife. Just at this moment, the door opened.

Johnnie's attention was pleasantly diverted.

"Mamma," he said.

Madame Langelles was carrying a tray. A candle was burning in the centre, and shedding a bright light upon an excellent supper. There were some slices of ham, some pancakes, and some baked apples; besides the nuts and pippins, which were Johnnie's special offering.

The table was soon laid. The old man and Johnnie were as happy as kings, and did full honour to the feast.

Madame Langelles had greatly enjoyed preparing this treat for her old friend; but now that the supper was ready, it was more than she could do to partake of it. She busied herself in waiting on the others, and took care they had all they wanted, but without eating a morsel herself. Johnnie did not perceive this, but old Hippolyte did. The man had a father's heart within him; and oh! what a father he would have made, had circumstances been different. But Providence makes no mistakes. Doubtless, this is just why so many child-loving hearts are never blessed with the little ones whom they would have loved too dearly—for whose sake they would have sacrificed too much. We feel quite sure, knowing the old pensioner as well as we do,

that it was so with him. Had he been a husband and a father, he might have been an idolater. As it was, he was a tender-hearted, benevolent old man, who cared for the widow and the fatherless.

"Come, come, my child," he said, "you must cheer up. Just look at Johnnie. Have you ever seen such spirits?"

"Ah," said the widow, with a deep sigh, "he does not know what the world is yet, happily for him."

"Oh, he knows a great deal more about it than you imagine. Would you like to know what he and I have been settling together all by ourselves here."

"Yes," said the widow. "What?"

"Well, first of all, that you are never to go back to that abominable shop."

"That's easy enough to say," replied the widow, with the slightest possible tone of impatience.

"And easy enough to do also," Hippolyte replied. And he made a sign to little Johnnie.

The child jumped off his chair immediately, and went to fetch something from the chest of drawers, where it had been hidden behind a pile of books.

He brought it to the old man.

It was a blue china plate, on which was laid a large sealed paper. On the top of the packet lay the old soldier's cross of honour with its red ribbon.

"What on earth is this?" asked Madame Langelles, in great astonishment.

"Open it, my child, and read it," he replied; "yet no, wait a moment, and listen to what I have to say first. I can't make fine speeches, as you know; still I've got something on my mind that I want to say. I dare say you think I'm a crusty, selfish old grumbler, who gets all he can out of you."

"Oh, grandpapa!" interrupted Madame Langelles.

"Let me speak, I tell you," he continued; "you don't know what I want to say. When that poor old dog over there dies-and I wonder he has lived as long as he has-I shall not have a friend left in the world, except you and Johnnie. God has taken compassion on my loneliness. He had long denied me what I should have so delighted to possess. None can tell how I have envied others the joys of a home, how all my life long I have dreamed of what it must be to have a wife and little ones to call one's own. now, when my life is drawing to a close, when death is near, when I might have been left to die alone, God has sent you to me, with your sweet voice, and tender heart, and helping hand. When first I knew you you were very happy, and I said to myself, 'She is kind to me and sorry for me, but she does not want me, I am of no use to her. All she does for me she does from charity, because she has a warm, loving heart, and wishes to share her happiness with others.' God knows how earnestly I prayed to Him to preserve your happiness to you, and to avert the trial that I saw afterwards coming fast upon you. If old Hippolyte could have had his way, you would never have stood in need of his help, or any other. I would have given all I had to save you from your sorrow. But God did not see fit to grant my prayer. And now I have only one thing to ask you. If you grant it, I believe in future I shall wish as much to live as I have often wished to die. Johnnie always calls me grandfather. Will you be my daughter—my real daughter—adopted by me for my child?"

Madame Langelles drew near the old soldier, and put her arms round his neck. An expression of the tenderest and most fatherly love lit up his aged face, and made his wrinkled features positively handsome. He laid his hand on her head, where some few grey hairs were already beginning to show themselves amidst her raven tresses,—they had all come during the last few months—and blessed her fervently. He called her his daughter, the dear, dear daughter whom God at length had seen fit to give him.

Then Madame Langelles, at his request, broke the seal of the thick packet, and read a few words; but the hot tears that came thick and fast prevented her reading far. Johnnie had to carry it to grandpapa, who read it himself.

There was no refusing, and no thanking: old Hippolyte would not hear of either.

Madame Langelles was his adopted child, and since she was taking no one's place in becoming so, what was there to be said about it?

All that old Hippolyte possessed was made over to her, and on her death to Johnnie; and it was more than any one might have imagined. The old pensioner's wants had been few. He had lived on next to nothing; and when even the smallest amount of incoming money begins to be saved up, it is wonderful how soon it accumulates. In future Madame Langelles would not need to earn her living. She would have nothing to do but to take care of her old father and her little Johnnie.

"It has been written a long, long time, my child," he said; "but I thought the time had come now to carry it into effect. Now let us begin to be happy at once."

Accordingly they began. Plans were made directly. This was in February, and arrangements were made for moving in April. A pleasant lodging was to be hired at Neuilly, close to the Bois de Boulogne. Grandpapa and Johnnie would be able to go out walking there every day, and when

the weather was fine could sit for hours under the great trees in the pleasant avenues. When Johnnie was older, he was to go to school, but meanwhile they would make him strong and robust by plenty of out-door exercise. Grandpapa was to give him lessons in good earnest every day. In the afternoons Madame Langelles would bring her work-not shopwork, but clothes for Johnnie, and warm vests and wrappers for her old father—and sit with them. Sometimes, when the days were long and warm, she would bring the supper with her in a big basket, and they would take it together under the trees by the water's edge. How delicious that would be, and what famous games of play Johnnie would have by the water, when his mother was there to sit by his grandfather and amuse him.

Johnnie gave half an ear to all these pleasant projects, sharing his attention between them and the new knife which was to be displayed on the pavement to-morrow.

"And Lily?" he asked, raising his rosy face to the old man's. "Mayn't Lily come too?"



ANDRE VALERY.

CHAPTER I.

THE WATERING PLACE.

THERE is in Normandy a rich valley, where the finest flocks that can be found in France feed in greenest pastures all the year round. Shut in at one end by hills, whose wooded summits seem painted in graceful ridges along the horizon, it stretches at the other end towards the sea, its luxuriant vegetation reaching nearly as far as the wide open beach. Thither, all through the summer months, the children from our great towns are taken in numbers to be strengthened by the sea-breezes. In bright weather they may be seen digging mimic moats and building little fortresses in the sand, or laying up stores of smooth stones and curious shells to carry back to their nurseries and schoolrooms in the dull, dark town.

A high-road runs along the shore and separates it from the neighbouring woods and orchards. On each side of this road, houses have been built in every imaginable style of architecture. Some are entirely devoid of any pretensions either to style or taste—great, heavy imitations of Italian villas, or curious, ill-constructed copies of Swiss chalêts. Others, on the contrary, are models of taste and skill, at once rustic and elegant, hiding themselves, as it were, behind the creeping plants and flowers, through which their light balconies and latticed windows seem to peep coquettishly.

But not one thoroughly country house is to be found amongst them all.

The real village of Curzonnes lies beyond, and by the beginning of October this place, so populous in summer, is almost deserted.

A narrow road, bordered on each side with grass and hedges, opens upon the wide, sandy high-road, of which we have already spoken, where the wind blows continually, and where the carriages and riding parties oblige you to stop almost at every step.

Scattered along this cross-road, nestling amidst the richly laden orchards, or under the shadow of the sheltering hills, may be seen many Norman farmhouses of all sizes and descriptions, large and small, rich and poor. And these compose the parish of Curzonnes.

To all lovers of real country, and to the little ones especially, who delight in running races, in gathering wild flowers and fruit, and in picking up apples and pears from under the heavily loaded trees, this road may be warmly recommended. No sooner has the traveller turned into it than the wind seems suddenly to lull, the air becomes warm and balmy, and a feeling of peace and rest steals over him. The perpetual rolling of the sea may still be heard, but from here it sounds pleasantly and soothingly, its nearness only adding a charm to the peaceful character of the place.

Who may describe the joy of the children who, running along this shady road make sudden digressions from it, leaping over stiles to find their way to one or other of the long, low houses. Eagerly they run into the pleasant kitchen, where the door stands invitingly open, and the brass and copper vessels within shine like gold. There they have always the same old story to tell. The farmer's comely wife is sure to hear that they are dying of hunger or thirst, and they are sure to be treated by her with a cup of milk fresh from the cow, or with the morning cream upon it, and a delicious slice of white home-made bread. Afterwards, they are ready to set forth with fresh courage to climb up to the old parish church of Curzonnes, whose dark wooden belfry rises above the green heights. But before they leave the farm, there are generally animals to be visited and fed, and some of

the home-made bread must be thrown to the chickens and ducks, who come flocking round at the sight of the first crumb.

Near the church stands a bridge—or, rather, we should say, a wooden plank—suspended over the ravine; down the sides of which the waters of a little cascade flow noisily. Just here, where the fine old elms twine their branches overhead, and form an arch, the road takes a turn. Beyond this it is but a rocky ascent, winding continually upward in zig-zags until you reach the old church.

If the children run on noisily here—if, catching sight of the lovely white roses that hang in clusters on the old wall, they rush forward to gather them with merry shouts and laughter—then check their innocent mirth.

For the cemetery lies around the church.

"God's Acre" is still preserved here; and the graves of the beloved dead lie around the house of God, where those who yet weep for them may hear the promises of the Resurrection repeated to them, and be assured continually that Jesus Christ has swallowed up death in victory.

Here, when the weather is fine and bright, it is difficult to make children believe that the place is a solemn spot—made sacred by the many tears that have been shed there. All is smiling—every blade of grass dancing in the breeze which comes joyfully up from the sea. Sunshine reigns all around, and we have to seek for a little shade behind the great stone cross, or under the shelter of the deep church porch. Below us the ocean, in all its glorious purity, stretches as far as the eye can reach, shut in on either side by the green slopes, covered with luxuriant verdure, by which we have ascended to our present picturesque position.

The tombstones in the cemetery are inscribed with names all unknown to us, who are strangers to the place. The humble mounds, great and small, without any stone to tell the name, speak to our hearts quite as eloquently, or perhaps more eloquently, than many a graven epitaph. Still, there is one grave which bears a name that will be remembered by all who visited the place last year. A newly hewn stone, shaped like a pillar, bears the following brief but pathetic inscription:—

ANDRE VALERY, DIED AT SEA, AGED THIRTY-FOUR YEARS, THE VICTIM OF HIS OWN HEROISM.

The grass has already grown thickly at the foot of the pillar. No one has trained the ivy, or tended the flowers around it. Although it is so short a time since it was first placed here, it looks more neglected than many another grave dug long before, on which, perhaps, some one may yesterday have laid a white geranium or a wreath of amaranths. It does not follow that, because a name is inscribed with glory on the grave, therefore he who lies beneath is lovingly remembered. If acts of Christian heroism were not also written in heaven; if no other reward awaited them than the passing words of human applause bestowed upon them here, then might we write, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," even upon the most glorious of the actions which have awakened our warmest admiration, and made life seem to us a noble thing.

CHAPTER II.

HEROISM.

IT was in the middle of September. The weather was warm and balmy. The air was still as death, and a thin veil of vapour overspread the sky. The sea was calm as a frozen lake, and the bathers found it so delicious that they could scarcely be persuaded to leave it. Many of them were quitting the place the next day, and farewells were exchanged, and promises of remembrance made. The children splashed about at the water's edge, coming down on tip-toe to meet the clear transparent waves, and then running screaming away from them. The swimmers carried on their skilful evolutions to the astonishment and amusement of the spectators: some of them on this last day venturing on such dangerous feats that the superintendent of the baths felt himself obliged to call them to order. For though the surface of the water was so smooth, a deep and treacherous current

ran beneath, and one might have to pay dearly for any foolish freaks or frolics. But on such a day as this, who could think of danger?

All at once there was a cry-

- "Some one is drowning!"
- "Where, oh where?"
- "Down below!"

And everywhere, in the water and on the shore, could be seen terrified people, with faces pale as death, clasped hands, and chattering teeth. All wanted to see, every one wished to go to the rescue, and yet they dreaded what there might be to see. Alas! the accident had happened at a great distance.

Those amongst the crowd who had the longest sight could only distinguish with great difficulty several struggling forms at a distant point to the right of the bay. It was a spot where few people ever bathed, on account of the force with which the tide ran there.

Bravery was not wanting: and several persons set off to their help at once. The old bathing-man hastened to unfasten the safety-boat always kept on the beach, and put off to sea, rowing as hard as he could.

But the swimmers were worn out long before they could reach the spot. They gave up the attempt in despair, and returned exhausted to the shore. The boat had scarcely accomplished a quarter of the distance, when there was a cry—

"Some one has gone to them!"

There was a general rush to the shore to watch for the return of the boat. At length it reached the spot where the terrible accident had happened, and soon after was seen slowly coming back.

Gradually it drew nearer and nearer, whilst the spectators on the beach crowded down to the very edge of the water in breathless anxiety to discover what burden it bore. None dared to speak; all dreaded, quite as much as they desired to discover whether the boat was laden with life or death. At length it touched the pebbly shore, and in solemn silence, with terror-stricken faces, and holding their breath with mingled emotions of hope and fear, many pressed forward to meet it.

The strongest and bravest amongst the men pushed their way in front of others to render what help they could.

Two young people were landed first, a brother and sister, who were sitting in the stern of the boat. The bystanders recognized them readily, having met them often on the parade and at the baths. They did not seem to have experienced any serious injury. The young man was pale, and dragged his dripping clothes heavily; but he walked uprightly enough,

and himself supported on his arm his young sister, who hung her head upon his shoulder. Her pretty hair hung dripping around her; the face which was usually so bright was almost purple, and her large eyes seemed riveted on the boat with an expression of horror and despair.

The young man who held her did not look at her. Those who saw them land never forgot the expression of either of their countenances. Though they had just been rescued from the very jaws of death, they were not thinking at this moment either of their danger or of their deliverance. Though they were the most loving brother and sister, they had no thought now for themselves or for one another.

They landed, and passed on; some friendly women coming, at the young man's request, to the half-drowned lady, and leading her away to where they could bestow on her all the care she needed.

But the boat had not yet discharged its load. The spectators never turned their heads to watch the retreating figures of the saved; but kept their eyes fixed on the body that was now being carried on shore. It was the corpse of a man about thirty years old: a fine, tall, handsome, strongly built man. The face was black. The limbs were white as marble. He was laid upon the shore; and though all felt that he was dead, he lay there long, whilst

all possible means were used, in the vain attempt to restore him to consciousness.

But as all felt would be the case, every effort proved useless.

It was decided that he should be carried home. But where was his home? Many came forward able to answer the question; for André Valery was well known at Curzonnes.

But amongst them none seemed disposed to undertake the terrible task of bearing that burden to that home.

One thought occupied the minds of all who had known the dead man—one vision floated before all their eyes. It was a terrible thought, though it was but the remembrance of a fair delicate girl. It was a fearful vision, though it was but the picture of this young thing—a bride whose happiness was not yet one year old, wringing her hands in mortal agony; perhaps falling unconscious at their feet; perhaps dying. Who could tell? Under the circumstances, who could tell?

It was suggested that she must be told first.

At length some one was found brave enough to undertake the task of telling her.

CHAPTER III.

THE YOUNG WIFE.

THE home that had just been so cruelly broken up, had only been very lately formed. A few, a very few, months of brightest sunshine had shone upon it, and then one great wave had swept over it, and engulphed its happiness for ever. The baby was not yet born.

In little country villages like Curzonnes, every one who has not been born within thirty miles of the place, at furthest, is considered a stranger. The next bay, or the valley to the left, or the coast on the right, are not looked upon as belonging to the same place.

Marie Desroches was the daughter of a pilot, and had been born and brought up in a neighbouring seaport town, about fifty miles from Curzonnes. She had lost her father when quite a child. It is almost needless to say that he was drowned at sea. Every-

one knows what a pilot's life is, and what its end must almost always be. The pilot's wife thanks God fervently when He brings her husband safe home. But each time that she parts from him, it is with the feeling that this farewell embrace may probably be the last, and that the little children's arms that cling so fondly to him now, may, perhaps, ere very long, have no father to cling to.

Marie's mother had always declared that she would never give her only child in marriage to a sailor. No power, and no persuasion, she would say, should ever induce her to consent to a marriage which might leave her perhaps before she was twenty a broken-hearted widow.

Marie had never had any wish to thwart her mother's determined decision.

André Valery was a young carpenter. And André Valery had early won her heart. They had grown up together in the same place. He had been her little protector almost from her babyhood. She could not remember the time when he did not call her his little wife, and when she did not like to be so called. They had chosen one another in childhood. When both were grown up, neither had ever felt any cause to regret their choice, and only waited for an opportunity to confirm it.

Madame Desroches, who had no other child but

her one pretty and darling daughter, would not consent to her marrying André until he was fairly established in a good business. He had travelled through all the sea-port towns of France in order to perfect himself in the trade of ship-carpentering, to which he had been apprenticed, and this had involved an absence of two years. It had been the first separation that he and Marie had ever known, and before it was over, the patience of both was pretty well exhausted.

But when he returned they were to be married at once. Such a wedding day as that had been! not a cloud in the sky! not a shadow on the horizon! not a misgiving in the heart of either!

When André pressed his little wife to his heart, and their two lives flowed into one—one happy life which was to last long, oh, so long!—these two young creatures tasted one of those earthly joys which are amongst its chief mysteries.

Andr's removed to Curzonnes immediately after the wedding. His business was to be carried on there, where there was a capital opening for a good carpenter, plenty of work and but little competition.

A pleasant little lodging was temporarily engaged. For André naturally wished to build his own house. How diligently and joyfully he had worked at it, and what a charming little house it promised to be!

It was to be built entirely of wood, and this for two reasons. It would be less expensive, and besides, he would be able to build it entirely himself. Every plank laid down for Marie's feet to tread, every bit of ceiling arranged to cover her dear head, should be the work of his own fingers. Not a nail should be driven in by any other hand. He would build it with double walls, making the outside one of considerable thickness, to keep out the wind, and make it warm. For the same reason he built it close under the shelter of the downs, at a little distance from the shore, in a pleasant spot close to a stream, which, rising in a narrow valley a little beyond, emptied itself close by.

Every evening Marie came to see how the work was getting on, and bestow her admiration and advice upon it, after which she would walk back with her young husband to their lodging. They never called the lodging home. That word was reserved for the new house. What chats they had together as they walked along so happily. Many turned their heads to get a second look at them. For they made a pretty picture! the fine young fellow in his carpenter's dress, with his bag of tools thrown over one arm, and the pretty young peasant girl in bright costume clinging to the other. It was early days yet, but even if it had not been, Marie was one of those little wives who would always have donned a

clean white cap and a bright smoothly ironed neckerchief and apron to go and meet her husband. Almost all the evening they generally had but one topic of conversation, the new house, and the furniture that was in preparation for it. The cheerful kitchen and the three pretty rooms were furnished and refurnished evening after evening. Baby was to be born there, and the house must be quite, quite ready before then. And time pressed now. André felt this, and for the last month, in his fear of not being ready for the great emergency the happy, happy emergency—he had been working almost by night as well as by day. By dawn he was at his work, and evening had well closed in before he left it. Yet he was never tired! If Marie came to meet him, they chatted and laughed all the way home. If it was too late for her to venture out alone, or if she was tired and could not come, as was sometimes the case now, he generally came in singing, bright as a bird, and ready to do anything to help her, to save her from fatigue.

Madame Desroches was to join them at Curzonnes as soon as the house was ready. Meantime, she remained alone in her former home, where she found the time rather long. But it was only for a very little while, and soon such happiness would begin again for her as would make up for all past sorrow. Marie's baby was to be her special charge, for Marie

was a singularly skilful lace-maker, and as soon as they were all settled in the new house, she was to take up her trade again. In this way many francs would be added weekly to the little household purse. And when people marry so young, and have a large family, perhaps, to look forward to, they should be careful, and begin at once to lay up something for the future.

Thus had time been passing since the wedding day. Not one presentiment of misfortune! Not one little cloud, as large as a man's hand, on the distant horizon.

Both were so young. Both were so strong. Both, besides, were so happy. The future stretched far and wide before them. They hardly thought of looking forward to it, they were too happily occupied in the present.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WIDOW.

It was the eighth of September. The day before, André and his little wife had taken a journey together. They had been down to see Madame Desroches, to fix a day for her coming to them. For the new house was nearly ready now. It only wanted the few finishing touches, and they would take possession of it.

Next morning, Marie was very tired, and was late in rising. She scarcely roused when her husband gave her a parting kiss before setting out for his usual work at the new house before breakfast. Consequently she was hurried in getting through her morning work and preparing the breakfast, and, for the first time in her life, she did not go to meet André coming from his work.

How he had worked that morning! "Only a fortnight before the baby comes," he thought, "and we must be well settled in our own home by then."

And he hammered in the nails hard and fast, and made such speed that he grew warm, and laid aside his waistcoat, for the morning sun was strong, and it was hot work toiling so hard in the heat.

All at once a sudden scream—a sharp cry as of some one, of more than one person, in agony—stopped him in his work.

The sound came from the sea.

He threw aside his hammer, and ran to see what it was; and what a sight met his eyes!

He saw many struggling forms, wrestling with the waves. He waited to see no more—wife and child had passed from his mind. There was no time for thought, at least for such as André. But had there been, no thought of his own happiness would have kept him back.

In another moment André was swimming with all his strength. There was not a moment to lose, for the accident had taken place at some distance. And drowning is quick work!

Many were standing on the shore who saw that strong man swim out to sea that morning. Not one who saw the sight will ever forget it to their dying day.

What happened afterwards no one knew, no one will ever know.

What was the cause of André's death? God only knows. Perhaps it was a rush of blood to the

head, heated as he was by his hard work. Perhaps it was the tight and fatal clasp of one of those whom he was seeking to save.

Meanwhile his little wife arranged her tidy room, and laid the table. She had prepared a good breakfast for her husband: in the early days of house-keeping young wives are not too frugal. The first thought is how to make the dear one comfortable, and the favourite dish is carefully prepared.

The breakfast ready, Marie set to work at the little curtain which she was preparing for the bassinet. Such a tempting little bassinet it was! when she had finished the dainty white muslin curtain, she fastened it on with little rose-coloured bows of ribbon, peeping in and out amidst the lace which was her own making. Rejoicing at having finished her work so successfully before André arrived, she sat still for a few moments, admiring it, and thinking what a surprise it would be for him when he came in. Then, as he did not come, she went to meet him.

Amongst the lower orders, bad news is usually told with very little preface. Sometimes when the tidings are very terrible, the thunderbolt is sudden enough to kill the victim on the spot.

It was cruel to tell her so suddenly, but it was not wilful cruelty. On the contrary, those who told her, broke the news as quickly as possible to save her from a yet greater shock. They were bearing the body home, and it would soon be at the door.

Marie did not faint. She only seemed to turn into stone. Her heart was numbed, and dead to any consciousness even of suffering.

She was not left alone in her sorrow. The neighbours gathered round her, and watched with her through the long night, during which she never left the dear remains of her beloved husband. Many spoke words to her, which it would have been kindness to have left unsaid. Many came and went, some from sympathy, but the greater number, we fear, from curiosity.

But those who felt most for her, those who could have spoken to her words of truest consolation, these held their peace. Happily for poor sorrowing human nature, there is in God's mercy, an abundant provision of consolation laid up for mourners in His word. But when the blow is only just struck, when the soul is stunned by its overwhelming force, it is not the time to speak. The truest mourners amongst the watchers who shared that night's vigil with Marie, only clasped their hands, and asked God under their breath to whisper some words of consolation to the unhappy being, who sat the whole night through, her face hidden on the pillow, beside André.

They buried André with all due honour. A public funeral was provided for the man who had given his life to save that of others. Nearly all of the villagers paid a last tribute of respect to the memory of the dead man, by following his mortal remains to the grave.

At the head walked the unhappy stranger whom André had saved, and whom every one pitied deeply.

The long procession wound its way up the steep ascent to the ancient cemetery of Curzonnes. The most solemn silence prevailed.

One man, who had been a near neighbour of André's, attempted to say a few heartfelt words, when the priest had concluded the service, but his voice failed.

Marie's mother came to her at once, to fetch her home, or rather to take her back to the old home of her childhood. The cottage at the foot of the downs remained unfinished for ever. No one wished to touch it. The hammer, the saw, all remained just as André had thrown them down when he rushed forth on his death errand.

André's noble deed was duly reported in all the papers, but without any of its touching details. It was merely one more misfortune—one more catastrophe added to the long list of accidents on the seacoast.

Even at Curzonnes, few were acquainted with all the touching circumstances which have been narrated here. Few knew how much more than life he had given that day, to duty and to his fellow-man.

Perhaps only a few of the visitors who have returned to Curzonnes this year, have felt their heart throb, and tears of sympathy rise to their eyes, as they passed the half-finished house upon the beach, abandoned now to the winds and the waves. Perhaps only a few amongst them have cared to inquire of the villagers what had been heard since of the young widow, who was then a happy wife?

And the tomb in the old cemetery?

Do many climb up that steep ascent on purpose that they may sit beside it, and think of the heroic young fellow who lies buried beneath; or is it only casually that their eyes rest upon it, when they have climbed the height, for the sake of the delightful walk, and the lovely view to be seen from it?

But there were some from whose souls an impression once made was not thus easily effaced. Some who saw André's noble act, or heard of it, discovered for themselves all that he had sacrificed in order to perform it—some who witnessed Marie's grief, or were told of it, and learned all the touching details of past love and bliss, and future hope and promise, that made it yet more interesting.

These, when summer came again, and they returned to Curzonnes, asked whether Marie yet lived, and whether God had sent her any comfort in her grief.

The young widow was still alive, though few could have recognized in her the blooming girl of two years ago.

The little rose-draped cradle had only been in use for a few short days. For less than a week, a white waxen little creature had been laid under the muslin drapery, whose rose-coloured lining shed a soft pink hue over a little dead face; and then a tiny hole was dug in the newly-made grave, and the baby was laid at its father's feet. Its life began in heaven. Its eyes opened on a better world than this. And Marie was well content that it should be so. Her life was gone—dead and buried in André's grave.

She returned to her mother's house, and lived there as though nothing had happened. Her health did not seem delicate, though she was deadly pale. She worked diligently at her trade, to gain her mother's living as well as her own. Every one said she was very patient and resigned. None had ever heard one murmuring word pass her lips. She had always known that life is full of sorrow; that no one can reckon upon anything in this world. She had seen her mother weeping for her lost husband, and putting on her widow's weeds.

But oh! the difference between believing and experiencing. Oh, the world that lies between what we have long known to be true, and what we have fell, in our own bruised and broken hearts, and blighted lives!

But Marie is not without comfort. Hers is a sure and certain hope. Her André was not only a hero. His was not an act of merely earthly heroism; but of Christian self-sacrifice. It might have been otherwise. Had André not been the Christian that he was, he might perhaps have performed the same act in the same way. For his was a noble soul, and noble souls, in the moment of emergency, do noble deeds, forgetful of self and of life. But great as the act would have been then, the bitter tears shed over him who had performed it, would have only had their bitterness increased by the cruel thought that no future glory awaited the hero for whom they were shed.

It was not so with André. He had gone to the world of heroes—to the heaven where every ransomed soul is a hero; where all have learned the secret of self-sacrifice; and where every crown struggled for, and won, is laid at the feet of Him who first gave his life, a sacrifice of all.

There Marie expects to meet him. She, too, is a heroine now; taking up bravely each day's weary burden, and bearing it without a murmur, for her Saviour's sake—and for her mother's. The old woman's grey hairs must not be brought in sorrow to the grave, by knowing all that her child daily suffers. She must see her smile sometimes, and must hear her speak cheerfully. But the time seems long, though it is scarcely a year yet, since the blow fell. Sometimes she is very desolate, remembering that she had not given him a parting kiss that last morning. Then she will sit quiet with the blessed Gospel of Jesus before her, and her hands clasped, until at length the Saviour's voice again is heard in her heart, and the light returns to her pale face—and the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees are strengthened once more.

But now the sun is going down, and the shadows of evening are lengthening. The tomb of André Valery, which we have been visiting, lies at our feet in deep shade.

Perhaps it will be long again before any one revisits it.

Be this as it may, the names of the weakest and feeblest of those who have followed in the Saviour's steps, and sacrificed themselves for others, are written in the book of life. The day will come when the story of each one of them will be read by all.

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